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DORNOCH CATHEDRAL AND PARISH









DORNOCH.

From the Picture by Sir GEORGE REID, P.R.S.A.



# DORNOCH CATHEDRAL AND PARISH

BY THE

Rev. CHARLES D. BENTINCK

D.D., F.S.A. Scot.

INCLUDING A CHAPTER ON  
THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF THE CATHEDRAL

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ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAPS

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TO THE SAINTLY AND EVER BLESSED MEMORY OF

GILBERT DE MORAVIA,

BISHOP OF CAITHNESS, THE PATRON SAINT OF DORNOCH AND

THE PIOUS FOUNDER OF ITS CATHEDRAL,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED AS A HUMBLE TRIBUTE TO HIS

GOODNESS AND GREATNESS.



## PREFACE

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THE compilation of a history of the Cathedral and Parish of Dornoch was first suggested to me, many years ago at Skibo, by the late Sir James Donaldson, Principal of St Andrews University. Though, for a considerable time, the pressure of other duties made such an undertaking impossible, the idea has always been at the back of my mind. It gripped me when I realised the widespread interest in the Cathedral which the Septcentenary of its founding evoked. To me that sounded a call for as full and authoritative an account of the past history of the Cathedral and its surroundings as an exploration of the available sources could provide. Had the Church records of pre-Reformation and Episcopal times survived, a rich mine of interesting and valuable information would have been at one's disposal. Their disappearance has been an incalculable and irreparable loss. The documents belonging to the earlier centuries that are extant afford only an occasional glimmer of light, which but faintly relieves the obscurity of those bygone days. My object has been to collect and collate from those sources not readily accessible to the ordinary reader all the available material relative to the past history of the parish and its historic church. Instead of weaving the information gleaned from old

documents into a narrative of my own, I have endeavoured, so far as possible, to allow them tell their own story. I have adopted this method because of a conviction—which I hope my readers will share—that the original text possesses an interest and value which no exposition of it can possibly claim. Remote-ness from the great libraries which offer a field for historical research and the many distractions and interruptions of my parish work have added to the difficulty of my task, and must be my excuse for any failure to do full justice to a subject which merits better handling than I have been able to give it. What has been done could not have been achieved without the assistance of many friends, whose kindness I gratefully acknowledge. I am greatly indebted to His Grace the Duke of Sutherland, who readily granted me access to the historic treasures of the Dunrobin Charter-room, as also to Mrs Carnegie for her kind permission to make use of the Skibo Castle library. I have to thank the Town Council of Dornoch for allowing me to examine the old municipal records, and the Town Clerk for his courtesy in affording me every facility for doing so. I owe a very great debt of gratitude to Dr Simpson, Librarian of Aberdeen University, for the untiring and invaluable help he has so willingly afforded me, and for his excellent contribution on “The Architectural History of the Cathedral,” which so greatly enhances the historical interest and value of my book. My warm thanks are also due to Prof. W. J. Watson, LL.D., Edinburgh for his kind and ready response to any appeal I made



for his help and guidance, as also to Mr A. O. Curle, F.S.A. Scot., and the Rev. A. B. Scott, B.D., for so kindly revising the first and second chapters respectively, which deal with periods of which they have made a special study. I would also acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr A. W. Johnston, Secretary of the Viking Club, who obtained for me from his Society its kind permission to reproduce several translations of charters from its admirable *Miscellany*, which has been of great service to me, notably the Rev. D. Beaton's excellent Introduction to the first volume of *Caithness and Sutherland Records*. I have also been greatly helped by the late Mr H. M. Mackay's interesting monograph on *Old Dornoch*, and *The Province of Cat*, by the late Rev. Angus Mackay, M.A. I am likewise under obligation to Mr H. F. Campbell and Mr D. Murray Rose, who may be regarded as the pioneers of research into the past history of Dornoch. To Mr A. A. Moir, M.A., Headmaster of Dornoch Academy, for his careful revisal of the proofs of my book, as for his many helpful suggestions regarding it, and to Miss Janet Murray, Teacher of Drawing in the Academy, for her excellent and accurate map of the parish, I tender my warmest thanks. The unfailing courtesy and valuable assistance of Mr Angus, Curator of the Historical Department of the Register House, and of his assistant, Mr MacInnes, I gratefully acknowledge, as also those of Dr Dickson, the Keeper, and the Assistant Librarians of the Advocates' Library, to which Mr A. C. Black, K.C., kindly gave me the necessary introduction.

The compilation of this history has entailed considerable research and labour which I have greatly enjoyed, and I now offer it to my readers with much diffidence, conscious as I am of its many defects and shortcomings; but with the hope that it may serve, in some measure, to stimulate their interest in the past history of Dornoch, and to dispel, to some extent, the mists that enshroud it.

CHARLES D. BENTINCK.

DORNOCH, *August*, 1926.

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### ERRATA

Page 44, last line, centuries should be centuries.

Page 71, 20th line from top, Dorogh should be Dornogh.

Page 89, 12th line from top, 12th should be 8th.

Page 89, 4th line from bottom, read Alexander Sutherland.

Page 141, 12th line from bottom, read 1571 for 1570.

Page 265, 12th line from top, omit *the*; read "minister of Fair Isle."

Page 310, 12th line from foot, read 10th June instead of 16th.

# DORNOCH CATHEDRAL AND PARISH

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## CHAPTER I

### PREHISTORIC TIMES

PREHISTORIC Dornoch may possibly be regarded as a subject outwith the scope of a history of the Parish, and yet no survey of its past can rightly ignore those remote ages that are lost in the mists of antiquity. The darkness that enwraps the earliest periods of our country's history has been partially illumined by the rays of light shed upon them by archæological research, to which we owe most of the knowledge that has been gained of Scotland in prehistoric times. Archæologists have endeavoured, and not without result, to interpret the unwritten record of these long ages of silence, which is provided by the prehistoric remains that have survived the passing of many centuries. These are to be found in every parish, and they cast a shadowy light upon its earliest history. But the record of the dim and distant past thus preserved cannot be read and understood without the key to its interpretation which Archæology provides. Its conventional division of prehistoric times into the

Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages indicates the successive stages of civilisation in Scotland, as in other countries.

The Neolithic is the earliest period of which any remains have been found in this country. The weapons and implements of polished stone exposed by the cultivation of the soil, or found in the kitchen middens and cairns belonging to that period, prove by their similarity that the whole of Britain at that time was inhabited by one race. Its identification is a matter of great difficulty. That the Neolithic inhabitants of Britain were Iberians from the west and south-west of Europe is held by some authorities to be proved by the evidence of skulls and skeletons and pottery vessels that have come down to us from Neolithic times. The people of this period are described as men of low stature and dark complexion, with black hair and eyes, oval faces and long-shaped heads. The evidence of their identity has been found in the cairns they constructed for the interment of their dead. These structures are of great size, and appear to be mostly of loose stones, which conceal and protect the chambers in which their dead were laid to rest. They are of varied form, and generally lie in a direction from east to west. The construction of these huge cairns must have required combined effort on the part of the builders, and goes to prove that they lived in communities, and were not a nomadic people, as might have been supposed. The relics found in the cairns do not shed much light upon the life of these earliest inhabitants of our country, but numerous examples of their implements and



weapons found elsewhere show that they were far removed from a state of unmitigated barbarism. Among the relics of this age there are none more interesting and remarkable than the arrow-heads and axes of highly-polished flint, the manufacture of which implied great dexterity and skill. The distribution throughout the country of flint factories—such as that of which traces are supposed to have been found at Unes—would seem to suggest that a trade in these articles, probably in the form of barter, was to some extent carried on.

Nothing of a definite character is known regarding the dwellings of the Neolithic people, unless the hut circles that abound all over the country can, with truth, be assigned to the period at which they lived. The earliest would appear to have been enclosures containing a small hut. The builders of the cairns for the dead were, doubtless, capable of erecting homes for the living, and the dwellers in the abodes represented by the hut circles may have belonged to some period, however late, in the Stone Age. This suggestion is supported by the testimony of one of the greatest authorities on the subject—the late Dr Joseph Anderson—which is well worth quoting.<sup>1</sup> “Reviewing the whole phenomena of the Stone Age,” he writes, “as these are manifested in Scotland, we find them affording evidence of capacity and culture in the individual, associated with evidences of civilisation in the community.”

The Neolithic Period was followed by the Bronze Age. Its advent marked an advanced stage in



civilisation, when bronze gradually superseded stone in the fabrication of weapons and implements. Associated with this change was the appearance in Britain of a new race. That is suggested by the discovery in graves assigned to that period of skulls of a shorter and rounder type than those of the Stone Age, indicating that the inhabitants of Scotland were no longer a homogeneous people, as they had formerly been. The intruders are held by some authorities to have belonged to the Celtic race. Their original home is unknown, but they are believed to have spread over a great part of the continent of Europe, and even to have reached Asia Minor. At some period, whose date cannot be determined, Celts migrated from the continent to this country, and ultimately took complete possession of it. The fate of the aboriginal population is not known, but traces of the Iberian type among the people of the Western Mainland and Isles of to-day point to the possibility of their having found a refuge there. The Celtic race has been divided into two great sections, known as the Goidelic Group and the Brythonic or Cymric Group. The Goidelic Celts are supposed to have been the first to invade this country, and, after some unknown period, to have been followed by the Cymric Celts, who drove the earlier settlers into the distant parts of the island.

The advent of the Celtic race may, with some degree of probability, be regarded as coinciding with the transition to the Bronze Age, if, indeed, it does not account for it. The relics that can be assigned to

this age, compared with those of the preceding period, exhibit a marked advance in culture and capacity. They consist of bronze weapons finely shaped and often richly decorated, ornaments possessing a certain beauty of form and finish, and clay urns differing in type and ornamentation from those of the former age. These are chiefly found in the sepulchral mounds of the period, which differ considerably from the cairns of the previous age in respect that they no longer contain a chamber to which access is gained by a passage. The body was cremated, and the ashes were deposited in an urn; or it was buried in a cist constructed of rough stones surrounding the body, beside which some article of bronze was often laid. Many of the graves of this period were not marked by any erection whatever.

With regard to the clothing and homes of the people of that time there is hardly any evidence. The assumption, however, is justified that skins and woven fabrics formed part of their dress, and that, equipped as they were with good bronze axes, chisels and gouges, they were capable of constructing houses of timber; wattlework, clay, and stone would also probably be employed to some extent. That they were an agricultural people there is evidence in the interesting discovery of bronze sickles in Scotland. For food they would have grain and the produce of the chase, while their domestic animals included oxen, sheep and hogs. Life under such conditions, though rude at the best, could not have been utterly devoid of a certain measure of comfort and culture. They apparently regarded their

dead with reverence, and the grave goods laid beside them would seem to indicate some belief in a future life.

The Iron Age probably began in Scotland about two or three centuries before the Roman invasion, and the transition from bronze to iron was so gradual that it had no immediate effect upon the condition of civilisation in the country. Thus it may be assumed that its industries, customs, and mode of life underwent little change until, with the dawn of history, Scotland emerged from the darkness of prehistoric times.

This meagre survey of those ages may help towards a better appreciation of the following notes upon the prehistoric remains of Dornoch, which are based upon the interesting and exhaustive report made upon them to the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland by Mr Alexander O. Curle, who was at the time its able and indefatigable Secretary, and is now Director of the Royal Scottish Museum.

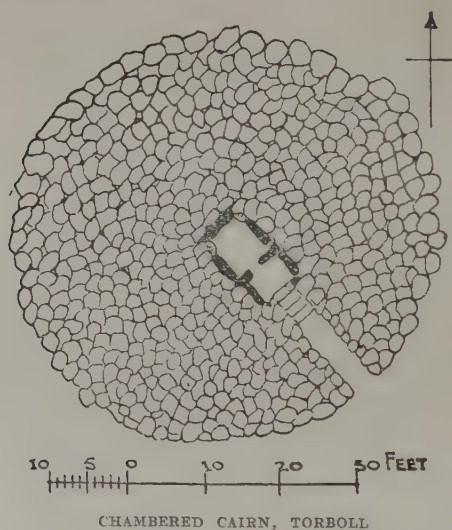
#### CAIRNS

Cairns are stone structures regarding whose sepulchral character there can be no doubt. These burial-places of a prehistoric people are intensely interesting on account of the evidence they afford of their culture and racial characteristics. The earliest cairns in which the people of Neolithic times buried their dead have each a chamber or chambers carefully constructed in the interior, and are therefore known as "chambered cairns." Of these there are

four classes, of which the horned long cairns are the oldest and the rarest. There are only three examples in Sutherland, and they are all situated in the parish of Farr. Then there are long unhorned cairns, of which Dornoch has one specimen; but of the next class, known as "horned round cairns," there is no example in the Parish. The prevailing type in the County of Sutherland is the "round chambered cairn," of which there are four examples in Dornoch. They usually have a single chamber divided into two unequal compartments by two low partition stones set across the chamber on either side, about two feet apart. The inner compartment is generally about 7 feet by 6 feet, while the outer is rather less. Large flat slabs compose the walls of the chamber, while the roof is formed of converging slabs. Access is gained by a passage about two feet square, which leads straight into the smaller compartment. Entrance is generally from the S.E. Unlike the brochs, these cairns are, for the most part, found in close proximity to the hut circles and associated mounds. That is notably true of the cairns in the Torboll district.

Towards the east end of Cnoc Odhar, to the west of Cambusavie Station, are the remains of a large round cairn. The stones in the centre have been so disturbed as to expose the slabs forming the west side of the chamber, which has not been cleared out. It has probably had two divisions, and has been polygonal in form. To the N.W., where several displaced stones are lying, there is an outer chamber. Human remains were found here in 1868.

About half a mile to the S.E. of Achinal there is a large cairn running E. and W., sub-oval in form. Its greatest length is seventy feet, and its greatest breadth is forty-three feet. The eastern part of it is in a ruinous condition, and its greatest elevation now is six feet. There has been no exposure of chamber or cist. Quite near to it are a few small mounds.



On the top of Carn Liath, to the N.W. of Torboll, there is a large cairn of circular form, which has been explored. The chamber and passage have been exposed. The latter is from the S.E., and the entrance to the chamber is formed by two slabs eighteen inches apart, on which a lintel three feet long is superimposed. Two slabs divide the chamber into two compartments, an outer and an inner, the

latter of which is the larger. The slabs are not of average thickness, and appear to be portions of the same boulder. The spaces between them are built up.

About a quarter of a mile above Torboll Falls, on an open piece of moorland between the road and right bank of the River Carnaig, stands a circular cairn in good preservation, covered with grass and birch trees. It is about six feet high, and about fifty feet in diameter. Its base is encircled by large boulders, and on the top there is a small rounded depression. Near to it is a group of small mounds.

On the lowest slope of An Droighneach, and to the east of it, stands an oval cairn running S.E. and N.W., and measuring 60 feet by 49 feet. A good deal of excavation has failed to expose either cist or chamber. There are mounds in the vicinity.

On Carn an Fheidh there are two circular cairns, which have been opened in several places, but without exposing either cist or chamber.

To the south of Skelbo Castle, at a distance of nearly a mile, there would seem to have been the remains of a cairn, which the trees and thick undergrowth have now concealed. Several mounds of the ordinary type occur in the vicinity.

Between the west end of Lochantriall and Evelix, on a rising ground, are remains of a circular cairn, which has apparently been excavated at the centre, and pillaged at its west side, without exposing either chamber or cist. The head of a large slab has been uncovered.



The remains of a chambered cairn are to be seen in a field about a quarter of a mile to the west of Evelix. It has now almost disappeared; but it appears to have been circular, with a diameter of about 68 feet. All that now remains of a large chamber are several slabs, and among them two opposite slabs of the inner compartment. Some large stones protrude behind the chamber, which may have formed part of another that faced the South.

In a field to the west of Clashmore are three large slabs, which seem to have formed part of a large stone chamber in a cairn of which but a small part now remains. It has been so demolished that its outline cannot be traced.

The remains of another circular cairn are to be seen on the east side of the path through the wood at Clashmore, about a mile to the N.W. of the village. Though considerable inroads have been made upon it, neither chamber nor cist has been exposed.

In the neighbourhood of Dornoch, on a stretch of waste land covered with whins, near to the east end of Embo Street, are the remains of a circular cairn with a diameter of about 44 feet. It has been excavated, and near the centre a cist was exposed which contained a few remains of bones and a flint head. The slab which still partly covers it is of sandstone, and on the under side has a well-defined cup mark.

#### HUT CIRCLES

Hut Circles are of all prehistoric remains the most abundant in Sutherland. They are of intense interest, because in their various forms they afford

us some idea of the dwellings of a people whose identity and character are shrouded in the veil that hides the remote past from our view. The name by which they have come to be known is somewhat misleading, as in reality these old structures were not huts, nor is their form always circular. Nothing now remains to indicate whether they were roofed or not. They vary greatly in structure and plan, but without careful and scientific excavation no opinion can be formed as to whether or not their variety is the result of gradual development in structure.

Though there are so many in the county, none appears ever to have been excavated by expert archaeologists. Among these there seems to be a consensus of opinion that these old structures belong to the early Bronze Age, and, possibly, to the late Neolithic Period.

The prevailing type is thus described by Mr Curle<sup>2</sup>:—"It is an oval or pear-shaped structure formed with a bank of earth or turf, and stones, or sometimes merely of the former, now rarely above two feet in height, enclosing an area measuring some five feet more in length than in width, the longest axis being in line of the entrance. There is great variety in size, but the variation of the diameter across is usually from twenty to thirty feet. The enclosing bank is some five to six feet in thickness, and of a uniform thickness throughout. The entrance, which varies in width, apparently, from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 feet, with rare exceptions, faces the S.E. Though the entrances are generally too indefinite to

afford an accurate measurement, it is observed that in many of the larger circles they have been wider, affording sufficient space for the access of sheep or cattle, and it is presumed consequently that these may have been folds.”

The eastern part of Sutherland affords the greatest number and variety of hut circles. Some of them have stone walls, built without mortar and about eight feet thick, instead of turf and stone banks. The interiors of these are almost invariably of a rounded form, and display a diversity of arrangement. The more complicated circles built of stone are usually found in groups by themselves, as are those of Creag Amail. Associated with circles of this type are the remains of old banks or walls, which suggest that “enclosing in some measure was practised when this form was in vogue.”

In the neighbourhood of hut circles are often to be found mounds formed of stones and earth or turf, covered with grass and heather, which local tradition generally makes out to be graves marking the sites of ancient battlefields. Groups of these occur frequently in the valleys, or on the hillsides several hundred feet above sea level. They vary in size and shape, but are usually round and slightly conical, with a maximum diameter of over twenty-six feet, and a height of not more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet. Some of them may in all probability be sepulchral, though a careful examination of those in Sutherland—the interiors of which have been exposed—discovered no signs of interments except in one near Ben Loyal, where a cist was found. It is far from easy to determine the period to

which they belong and their purpose. Many of them have been associated with the pastoral occupations of the people. The fact that hut circles are usually found in their vicinity is suggestive. There are other large mounds of a crescent shape that occur near to hut circles. These are not regarded as having any connection with burials, and were possibly shelters for cattle.

The location of hut circle remains in the parish of Dornoch affords no evidence as to the distribution of the population in prehistoric times. The progress of agriculture in the Parish has been responsible, no doubt, for the disappearance of these interesting relics of a remote age from the area where the soil has been cultivated. To that may be assigned the comparative absence of any traces of these ancient dwellings from the lower reaches of the Parish. In the near neighbourhood of the town of Dornoch there is only one small group of hut circles. The most outstanding one is near to the south end of Lochan-triall, and has an inside measurement of 30 ft. by 34 ft., and is enclosed by a bank about six feet thick. The entrance is at the S.E., and in the centre of the passage which leads to it a tree had been planted. In the vicinity are several small mounds, and traces of a few hut circles of oval shape, the details of which can hardly be traced owing to the overgrowth of heather. They indicate the existence of a small community there in the remote past.

At Dalchiel, on a piece of waste ground towards the River Evelix, there are traces of several circular enclosures in the neighbourhood of a small mound.

About a mile to the N.W. of the village of Clashmore are the remains of a hut circle with its entrance to the S.E., and traces of a chamber on the west side of the passage, in which a tree had been planted. Around it are a number of small mounds, and about fifty yards to the N.W. stands a large and more prominent one, while further on in this direction others are to be seen.

Astle has quite a goodly number of mounds and hut circles, besides some rather indistinct remains of ancient walls. Two hut circles—one of the usual oval form, and the other circular—lie quite near to each other at some distance from the most westerly house in Astle. In close proximity to them there are several mounds, and at some distance away to the N.E. lie the ruins of another circle of a slightly pear-shaped form, with the main entrance from the N.E. The enclosing wall of stone seems to have been of greater height than usual, while the interior would appear to have been divided by stone walls into three compartments, to which there were evidently separate entrances. There are no mounds in the vicinity.

In the neighbourhood of Achvaich, on the slope of a hill, there is a group of mounds with a hut circle of oval form and indefinite outline.

The Torboll district is particularly rich in hut circles and mounds. On the south side of the hill, about a mile to the west of Torboll, lies a group of mounds of larger size than the ordinary type. One of them is built of a combination of small and large

stones, and its outline is irregular. Near to it lies a hut circle of oval shape, overgrown with heather, with a small one to the north. At a higher altitude in the same direction another large group of small mounds is situated, to the south of which a small hut circle stands. Another cluster of small mounds—most of them circular—lies further north and west.

Carn Liath has some interesting prehistoric remains. Immediately to the north of it lies a group of small mounds, and a hut circle measuring 8 ft. by 12 ft. In the near neighbourhood is another mound, and a circular enclosure, which appears to have had two entrances. To the N.W. of Carn Liath lies a well-defined circle with stone walls, “faced towards the interior with flat-sided boulders set contiguously.” The passage which leads to the entrance on the S.E. has an opening to its west side leading into a triangular chamber. To the east of the entrance a small portion of the interior is set off with boulders, forming a chamber four feet long and three feet wide.

In the neighbourhood of Torboll Falls are the remains of a circular structure, which has an interior diameter of about thirty feet, with traces of “secondary rectangular erections” inside. Near by are a small oval mound and a natural hillock surmounted by a small circular mound, which was probably constructed.

At Brae there are two hut circles. One of them lies at some distance to the east of the keeper’s house, and the enclosure—measuring 30 ft. by 32 ft.—is formed by a stone and earth bank about seven feet

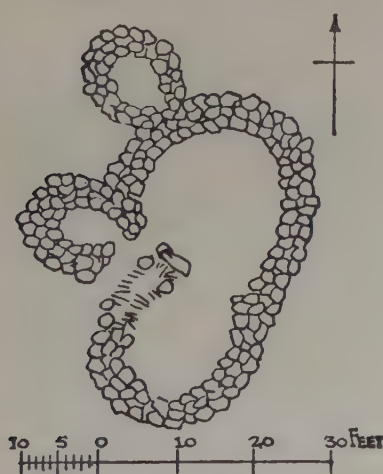


wide. At a distance of about one hundred yards to the N.W. of it stands another of more complex form. Mr Curle's description of it is as follows<sup>5</sup>:—"The interior has been sub-divided into two main compartments by a bank or wall, varying from 6 ft. to 9 ft. in thickness. The compartment on the S.W. side, which is oblong, with a curve towards the east at the south end, measures about 21 ft. by 9 ft., while the other on the N.E. is approximately circular, and has a diameter of about 20 ft. Opening out of the latter compartment towards the S.E. is another, measuring interiorly some 7 ft. by 4 ft., and containing on its N.E. side a small enclosure, 3 ft. 6 in. in length by 1 ft. 6 in. in breadth. The entrance to the large circular enclosure has been from the E.S.E. by a passage 2 ft. 6 in. wide and about 9 ft. long. The entrance to the other large enclosure is not apparent. In the back of the circular compartment is a recess in the main wall, 2 ft. wide by 1 ft. 6 in. deep. The original width of the main entrance is not ascertainable. Beyond it, in the interior, is an open circular space of from 10 ft. to 12 ft. in diameter. The bank on the east side of the entrance is carried outward for a total length of 22 ft., and at its termination there is an indication of a wall base passing at right angles to it, in front of the entrance." There are no mounds anywhere near those two hut circles, but, within half a mile to the east of the keeper's house at Dalnamain, lies a hut circle with about a dozen mounds in its vicinity.

On the west of the burn known as Allt Tigh Neil, just above the birch wood that overlooks the road up

the Strath, there are two hut circles beside a group of about twenty small mounds. The smaller one has to the S.W. of it a small rectangular enclosure, which Mr Curle thinks is probably a secondary construction.

The Creag Amail group of hut circles is a large and interesting one. A detailed description of them all would occupy more space than can be afforded;

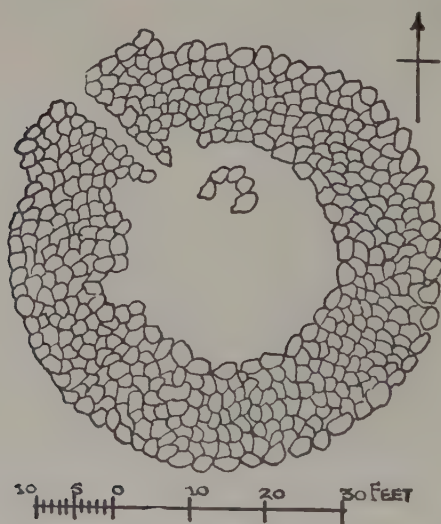


HUT CIRCLE, CREAG AMAIL

but four of them are of special interest, and deserve more than a passing reference. One of them to the N.W. of the cairn on the summit of the hill is noticeable because of its unusual form. The main enclosure is sub-oval, and is 37 ft. long. About the middle there is an inward bend in the wall which divides it into two compartments, into the larger of which entrance is gained by a passage at its S.W.

end. On the west side of the passage there is a small circular chamber, and attached to the outer main wall on the N.W. is a small circular enclosure, to which there is no visible entrance. The walls of the structure are of undressed stone, and are dry-built. They are in a ruinous condition.

At a somewhat greater distance from the cairn, and more to the west, stands a rounded enclosure

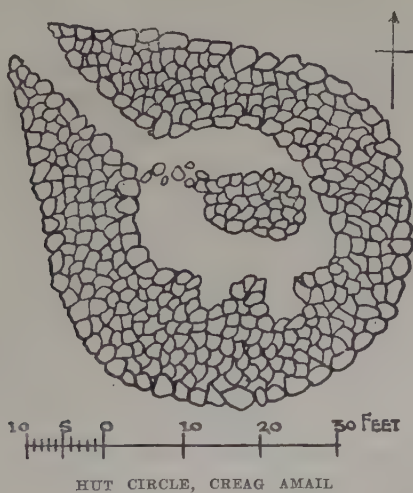


HUT CIRCLE, CREAG AMAIL

with a wall 13 ft. thick, built without mortar of large undressed stones. Entrance is gained by a passage in the N.W., 18 ft. long and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ft. wide. A noteworthy feature of this enclosure is the existence of three recesses in its wall on the inside, one on each side of the entrance, and the other a few feet from the entrance to the right. What purpose

these served it is difficult to determine. The interior of the enclosure is covered with bracken.

About a hundred yards to the west of the last enclosure is another of similar construction, which has also two recesses adjoining one another in the south section of the wall. The details of the interior are not clearly defined. A bed of stones extends from the entrance towards the S.E. of the interior,



and divides it into two main compartments, one of greater size than the other. The recesses are in the wall of the larger chamber. The containing wall is about thirteen feet thick, and the entrance is from the N.W. To the east of it lies a ruinous structure: its wall has a thickness of about eight feet, and is formed of boulders.

Another with a similar wall lies to the N.W. of the large cairn on Creag Amail. The interior is

circular, and entrance is gained to it through a passage from the S.E. A good-sized chamber is attached to the S.W. end of the enclosure, access being given to it off the west side of the passage at its outer end. The wall on its east side is prolonged indefinitely down the hillside.

In addition to these prehistoric remains, there are others of minor importance, including a group of mounds on the upper side of the road leading from Cambusmore to Achinal; a stone hut circle to the S.E. of the shepherd's house there; and another to the north of it, with a large group of mounds of the ordinary type.

At the east end of Cnoc Odhar, to the west of Cambusavie Station, are the remains of a hut circle of simple oval form, and, to the west of it, the site of another. Near to them are a few small mounds, which are hidden by the whins that cover the hill at this point.

#### BROCHS

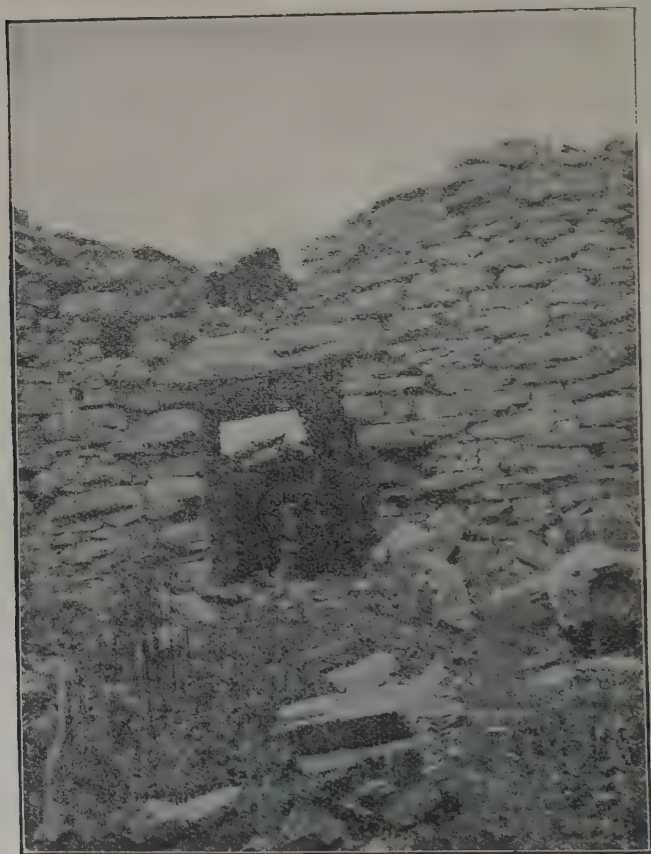
Brochs are massive, round, dry-built towers of great interest. They are peculiar to Scotland, and are most numerous in the northern counties, where over three hundred are located. We can form some idea of their original form and arrangement from the better preserved specimens and those that have been excavated. A broch may be described as a hollow circular tower of dry-built masonry, rarely more than seventy or less than forty feet in total diameter, and with a probable height of from forty to sixty feet, inclosing a circular court from twenty-five to forty-



five feet in diameter. The wall, varying in thickness from nine to twenty feet, is constructed of rough undressed stones. An entrance three feet wide and four to five feet high, roofed with flag-stones, forms the only breach in the wall from the outside. It leads into a narrow passage with checks for a door a few feet inward, frequently with a guard-chamber in the right wall, and occasionally another chamber on the opposite side. Opening off the court there were generally small chambers hollowed out of the wall, roofed with converging stones, and lighted at times by an opening above the doorway. A winding staircase led from an entrance, usually on the left of the court, to the top, affording access to galleries carried round the tower, the stone roof of one being the floor of that above it. Light was supplied by windows placed above each other that looked into the central courtyard. The door was probably a slab of stone, and was kept in position by a bar inserted into holes on either side. Its situation within the passage made it impossible for more than one man at a time to reach it, and the narrowness of the passage prevented the use of levers. Their purpose undoubtedly was to provide places of shelter and defence for the residents in their neighbourhood, when the lives and property of the community were in danger. Admirably constructed for such a purpose, they were impregnable, and their defenders, provided they had sufficient food and a well inside the enclosure, could hold out for an indefinite time. They were the defensive strongholds of an agricultural people settled upon the arable land

## DORNOCH CATHEDRAL AND PARISH

of the country. Their distribution proves that, for—except in the west of Scotland—they are generally found in the neighbourhood of the most fertile lands.



BROCH ENTRANCE FROM INTERIOR

Some guard the passes of the straths; others are beside lochs; some are near the seashore. They often occur in groups; occasionally they are isolated.

Relics found in them indicate that the period of their construction and occupation was in the early Iron Age. One of the Sagas tells of the temporary occupation of the famous broch of Mousa in Orkney about 900 A.D.

The structure, according to Dr Joseph Anderson, is distinctively Celtic in character and origin. He thus comments upon it<sup>4</sup>:—

“The design of the whole structure and the arrangements of all its separate parts exhibit a careful adaptation of means and materials to the two main objects of shelter and defence. The clever constructive idea of turning the house outside in, as it were, placing its rooms within its walls, and turning all their windows towards the interior of the edifice, implies boldness of conception and fertility of resource. . . . In short, the concentration of effort towards the two main objects of space for shelter and complete security was never more strikingly exhibited, and no more admirable adaptation of materials so simple and common as undressed and uncemented stone for this double purpose has ever been discovered or suggested.”

In the County of Sutherland there are the remains of 67 brochs, nineteen of which are structureless heaps of stones. Most of them are situated in the eastern part of the county, and many of them are surrounded by a wall, which afforded additional protection, and provided a shelter for cattle. It is worthy of note that most of the brochs are not

situated in the near vicinity of the hut circles and the mounds associated with them.

In the Parish of Dornoch there are only two of these prehistoric structures of which there are any remains. One of them is situated on a rising ground towards the centre of Skelbo wood, which commands an extensive view of Loch Fleet and the surrounding country. The structure is now a hopeless ruin, and is little more than a heap of stones, mostly covered with grass and trees. No part of the wall is now to be seen, and it is difficult to form any definite idea of the extent of the building. It would appear to have been encircled by a protecting wall, which has been obscured by overgrowth. There are traces of an enclosure to the N.E., formed by crossing walls, which may have been used for the housing of stock. There are indications that the entrance to the broch may possibly have been from the east.

At Brae, to the east of the burn known as Allt Lochan Iain Bhuidhe, a short distance above the point where it joins the River Carnaig, are the remains of another broch. It must have been placed there as a sentinel to guard the pass. It is now in ruins, having shared the fate of many similar structures that became quarries for the supply of stones for road metal and other purposes. It stood at the foot of the hill, above a bank with a steep slope towards the stream. The outside wall has been rased to the ground, while the inside is only five feet at its greatest height. The wall is thickest at the W.S.W., where the entrance probably was. The site of the

broch has now been enclosed by a wall, and adjoining it there is another enclosure of circular form.

At Dalnamain is the only specimen of a Hill-Fort to be found in Dornoch. Only five such structures are to be found in the county, and they are all in its eastern part. There are no prehistoric remains regarding



EXTERIOR OF BROCH

which so little is definitely known. Their distinguishing feature is their erection on sites that, by their natural elevation, are adapted for defensive purposes. They present no such uniformity of plan or structure as do the brochs, and are divided into two great classes, viz., Earthworks and Stoneworks. The one



at Dalnainain appears to have been of stone, and stands on a small hillock. It is an oval enclosure, 78 ft. by 42 ft., the bit of wall left being about two feet high and eight feet broad. There has been an encircling wall lower down, and right round the base of the hillock are the foundations of an outer defence, supplemented on the north by a trench about six feet deep. The entrance to the main enclosure was probably from the east end.

These notes on the prehistoric remains of Dornoch, read in the light which archæological research has shed upon such relics of the distant past, may afford some idea, however faint, of the conditions of life that obtained in the parish in prehistoric times.

## CHAPTER II

## THE DAWN OF HISTORY

THE dawn of history in Scotland dates from Agricola's campaign in 80 A.D., of which his son-in-law, Tacitus, gives a graphic description in his biography of the great Roman general. That is one of the earliest records containing any reference to Scotland, and it affords the earliest definite information we possess regarding the country and its inhabitants. Their inability to make any stand against the disciplined legions of Rome the historian attributes to their disorganisation and lack of unity. But the Roman advance roused their patriotism to such a pitch that they combined their forces under Calgacus in 83 A.D., and fought against the army of Agricola in the Battle of Mons Graupius. Though the Romans were the victors, their progress northward was arrested, and the tribes to the north of the Tay retained their independence. Their combination to resist the Roman advance must have helped to weld them into a more united federation, and led ultimately to the formation of the vast extent of territory to the north of Antonine's Wall into the great kingdom of Pictland. Its inhabitants in the fourth century were known collectively as Picts. Around their origin a fierce controversy has raged, and various theories have been advanced and advocated.

The first mention of the Picts occurs in an oration which Eumenius delivered in 297 A.D. Another orator in the fourth century speaks of "the Caledonians and other Picts," which suggests that between the two peoples there was in reality no racial difference. Gildas in the sixth century described them as hailing from the North across the sea, and as very savage, with more hair on their villainous faces than decent clothing on their bodies. He says that after repeated visits they settled down in the furthest part of the island, and occasionally made forays for booty and devastation.<sup>1</sup>

Bede in the eighth century gives an account of the settlement of the Picts in Scotland in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, where he says that they put out to sea from Scythia in a few long ships, and were driven by the wind beyond Britain to the North of Ireland. The Irish Scots refused them, but sent them to Britain, promising them help if opposed. The Picts went to the northern part of Britain, and because they had no wives, the Irish Scots provided them on condition that the Pictish kings should inherit the throne through their mothers. This custom prevailed in Bede's time.<sup>2</sup>

Nennius, writing in the eighth century, says:—"After an interval of many years, not less than 800, Picts came and seized the islands which are called Orcades. And afterwards from the islands they laid waste many regions and seized those on the left shore of Britain, and they remain there holding a third part of Britain until the present day."<sup>3</sup>

Professor Watson in a paper on "The Picts," which appeared in a recent volume of *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, arrives at the conclusion<sup>4</sup> "that the Picts really did settle at first in the Orkneys and Shetlands, and held a position there very similar to that afterwards held in these islands by the Norsemen. Thence, like the Norsemen, they gradually extended their power on the mainland and throughout the Isles of the West, and to a less extent along the West Coast. . . . Already by the beginning of the fourth century we may suppose that they had become lords of the northern mainland as far as Inverness at least." He describes the dominant people of Pictland as "tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed, long-limbed men, fierce, proud and war-like." Subject to them were the pre-Celtic people, consisting of the early settlers from the Mediterranean shores, "dark-haired, dark-eyed, lightly built, short of stature, and long-headed"; also the Alpine race, who were "brown-haired, of sturdy and somewhat stocky build, taller than the Mediterranean race."

The latest pronouncement on the racial question by Prof. Bryce of Glasgow University in his Rhind Lectures would appear to suggest that the Picts were the product of a fusion of the races who in succession invaded and took possession of Scotland, the later comers driving the earlier peoples northward. In the summary with which he concluded his lectures he says<sup>5</sup>:—"Scotland was occupied from the South by peoples who filled up the Northern lands as the ice cap disappeared. North Britain was included in all

probability in the area of differentiation of the Nordic race. There was continual infiltration from the South of units showing in course of time some modification from the original Eur-African stock. The latest of these was the people of the Megalithic tombs. The stream of long-heads was broken at the end of the Stone Age by a swarming from Central Europe of the round-heads located there from early Neolithic times. They in all probability carried with them a primitive Celtic speech. Mediterranean and Alpine peoples blended in Scotland to form a population which was undisturbed by any considerable change until a comparatively short time before the Romans arrived. Meantime Ireland received, in Hallstatt times, and direct from the Continent, an infusion of fair people who introduced their culture, and probably the Celtic speech of Goidelic type. Long afterwards the Gaelic dialect was introduced into Scotland from Ireland, and replaced the Pictish dialect."

The few traces that remain of the language of the Picts indicate that it was Celtic, with a strong affinity to modern Welsh. In his *Place-Names of Ross* Professor Watson makes that clear, when he says definitely<sup>6</sup> "that linguistic evidence goes to show that the Pictish language was Celtic, and belonged to the Cymric branch represented now by Welsh and Breton, and until recent times by Cornish." That the Picts were Celts their antiquarian remains, form of government, and language—so far as it is known—all go to prove.



They appear to have been a homogeneous race and an organized community. Dr Skene thus describes their organisation<sup>7</sup>:—"The unit was the Tuath or tribe; several Tuaths formed a Mor-Tuath or great tribe; two or more Mor-Tuaths a Coicidh or Province, and at the head of each was the Ri or King, while each province contributed a portion of territory at their point of junction to form a central district in which the capital of the whole country was placed and the Ri or King, who was elected to be its Ard-Ri or Sovereign, had his seat of government."

They were not only a pastoral people; there is evidence to show that they tilled the soil, and were fond of the chase. Their religion seems to have been a personification and deification of the objects and forces of nature. Though they had attained to a measure of civilisation, they were in pagan darkness until, after the departure of the Romans from Scotland in 410 A.D., the light of Christianity dawned upon the remote regions of the North.

The scholarly author of *The Pictish Nation* has by his original researches shed a new light upon the debt Scotland owes to St. Ninian and his noble band of Missioners for its evangelisation. His contention that Pictland was brought to Christianity through the labours of St. Ninian is supported by the number of dedications in his honour that are to be found along the east coast, and as far north as Shetland. Ailred—his biographer—relates that the saint taught the Picts "the truth of the Gospel and the purity of the Christian faith, God working with him and confirming

the Word with signs following.” Bede gives no details of Ninian’s work; but even his brief account indicates that his success must have been great, and that he achieved the downfall of paganism in South Pictland. Mr Scott shows that for Bede, with his knowledge of geography derived from Ptolemy’s map, “this meant the whole Pictish nation, as Bede knew it, namely, Pictland east (Bede’s south) of Drum-Alban, the Gaidhealic or Scotie border.”<sup>8</sup> Mr Scott’s theory has been the object of a good deal of adverse comment on the part of those who assign to St. Columba the credit for the evangelization of Scotland, and belittle the work of St. Ninian. But the most convincing evidence of the widespread and enduring character of his great work is to be found in the number of old foundations over a wide area that bear his name. And it is important in this connection to bear in mind that Early Celtic churches took their names from their founders, and that not until the eighth century did dedications to departed saints come into vogue. There is every reason, therefore, to suppose that the light which illumined the heathen darkness of the remote regions of the North came from Candida Casa on the shores of the Solway Firth. St. Ninian and his brethren were the torch-bearers, and whether their great work achieved permanent results or not, they at least laid the foundations of the Early Celtic Church in Pictland.

This brief survey of the early history of Scotland may serve as the background to a more detailed study of the most northerly part of Pictland with which this

history is more immediately concerned. The darkness of the night which envelopes that remote region in those far-off days is but faintly illumined by a few dim and distant stars that shine with an uncertain light. No definite historical information is available regarding Dornoch in these early centuries, and we must rest satisfied with such light as may be indirectly shed upon its earliest history by whatever knowledge can be gleaned from various sources—not always dependable—with reference to the ancient Province of Cat, which comprised the modern counties of Caithness and Sutherland.

One of the oldest legends<sup>9</sup> regarding Alba tells that it was divided by Cruithne, the legendary ancestor of the Picts, into seven provinces, which were allocated among his seven sons, whose names were given to their respective territories. The most northerly province was assigned to Cait, and from him it derived its name. Our earliest historical information we owe to Ptolemy, the great geographer, who has given us the names of the various tribes that occupied the different parts of the country towards the middle of the second century. He assigned the territory that afterwards came to be known as the Province of Cat to four tribes, of which the Cornavioi and Smertæ occupied Caithness, the Cairenoi, or Sheep-Folk, the west of Sutherland, while the S.E. portion, including Dornoch, was inhabited by a tribe to which he gives the name Lougoi, the Raven-Folk, as Prof. Watson suggests. We gather from the name that they may have been a dark pre-Celtic race, possibly descendants

of the aboriginal Iberian people, who had been pressed northward by the Celtic races that followed and superseded them. Occupying, as they did, that part of the county most capable of cultivation, they were, probably, agriculturists, while their neighbours to the west—as their name implies—were a pastoral people. Archæological research has demonstrated the fact that, so far from being barbarians, they had reached a certain degree of culture and civilization.

Dr W. Douglas Simpson, in his *Origins of Christianity in Aberdeenshire*,<sup>10</sup> thus writes regarding the civilization of the Picts:—"Our Pictish ancestors were not barbarians. . . . In the first few centuries of the Christian era the Celtic inhabitants of Scotland had long outgrown the stage of barbarism. The primitive arts of the Stone and Bronze Ages lay far behind them, and they were now in the fullest development of that high and very special civilization known as "Late Celtic" culture, which prevailed throughout the Celtic peoples of Western Europe in the closing stages of the prehistoric Iron Age. . . . In Pictland and in Ireland, which remained outwith the sphere of Rome, the native Celtic culture continued to flourish right down into the Middle Ages. It was in its fullest vigour of artistic development throughout what is now Scotland during the fifth, sixth, seventh and succeeding centuries that saw the active missionary enterprises of primitive Christianity. . . . The early population was an active and progressive race, neither poor in material resources nor lacking in a due sense of the higher values of life.

They were fully qualified to receive the glad tidings that the early missionaries brought them."

Unlike their countrymen in the far South, they never came under the civilising influence of Rome, whose legions, though they penetrated Perthshire, and under the Emperor Severus reached Morayshire, never got beyond that. It is a matter for speculation whether Agricola's fleet, during its cruise on the East Coast of Scotland as far as the Orkneys, paid a visit in passing to any part of the Sutherland coast, and whether the presence of Roman relics in the Carn Liath broch near Dunrobin might not be explained in this way.

Tertullius, writing in 196 A.D., says that "those localities of the Britons hitherto inaccessible to the Romans had become subject to Christ," and that "the kingdom and name of Christ have extended to places which defied the arms of Rome." That can hardly be true of the Province of Cat, whose people were, doubtless, in heathen darkness, until the light came to them through the medium of St. Ninian, who was the first to introduce Christianity into Pictland. Born of noble parentage c. 360 A.D., he was noted for his early piety, and as a young man went to Rome, where he spent some years in study, and was commissioned to preach the Gospel to his own countrymen. On his way home he paid a visit to St. Martin of Tours, to whose inspiration and guidance he owed much, and to whom he dedicated the first church built by him at Whithorn. Constructed of stone, it was known as Candida Casa, and became the centre



of Christian light to the Southern Picts among whom Ninian's greatest work was done. Not long after his foundation of Candida Casa as a centre of the Christian faith, he began the evangelization of the East Coast of Pictland, where he founded churches. He died at Whithorn c. 432 A.D.

The author of an old and anonymous *Life of Kentigern* gives St. Ninian his rightful place in the evangelization of Scotland, when he says:—"And the Picts received the faith first, in great part, through St. Ninian; afterwards through saints Kentigern and Columba." The Picts were for the most part pagans when Ninian began to preach to them. There may have been an earlier Christianity among them: if there was, they must have apostatized. St. Patrick, who was nearly contemporary with St. Ninian, speaks of the "apostate Picts." Authorities differ as to the extent and character of Ninian's work. Mr W. Forbes Gray maintains "that the apostolic labours of Ninian were a minor or, more strictly, an isolated episode, which had no direct bearing on the general growth of Scotland," and that "Ninian's work, whatever its nature, perished with him." The author of *The Pictish Nation*, on the other hand, affirms that "the Church founded by S. Ninian flourished as the sole Church of the Pictish people for 470 years (c. 420—c. 890 A.D.)," and supports his statement by weighty evidence. Whatever the issue of the controversy, there can be no doubt regarding Dornoch's indebtedness to St. Ninian for the inspiration and education of the youth who afterwards became the

founder and head of the earliest Christian settlement there. Among the pupils who attended Ninian's College at Candida Casa was Finbarr, who, on account of his early and close association with the history of Dornoch, has an undoubted claim to more than a passing reference in any attempt to tell the story of its past. He was one of the greatest men of his time, and his name is still held in veneration in this Parish.

Finbarr, according to an old tradition recorded by Torfæus, was a native of Caithness, and was of noble birth. Berriedale (Barudal) has been suggested as his birthplace, but of that there is no evidence. He was more probably an Irish Pict, as Mr Scott tells us in his *Pictish Nation*, and was sent in his youth from Aondruim to Candida Casa to continue and complete his education. There he spent twenty years (c. 520—540 A.D.), and after teaching for a time became a missionary. During his stay at Whithorn he is said to have visited the East Coast of Pictland, and may then have found his way to Dornoch, where he founded a *muinntir* over which he presided for a time. He afterwards returned to Ireland, and became Ab of Maghbile or Moyville in Ulster.<sup>11</sup> He appears to have been more of a student and a teacher than a missionary. We gather from his *Life* that he had a love for manuscripts, and carefully guarded those he possessed. The *Kalendar of Angus* gives him the credit of having brought the first complete copy of the Gospel into Ireland, while the *Kalendar of Cashel* says that along with it he also brought the MSS. of the Mosaic Law. A link between Dornoch

and Iona has been forged by the fact that St. Columba was a pupil of St. Finbarr, and was ordained as a deacon by him at Moyville. There he secretly got possession of his master's copy of the Gospel or Psalter, which he surreptitiously copied. His right to the copy was disputed, and King Diarmid, having been called upon to arbitrate, decided in favour of St. Finbarr, on the ground that to every book belongs its copy, as to every cow her calf. This led to the battle of "Cul Dreimhne," and afterwards to Columba's enforced exile from Ireland and settlement in Iona. Master and pupil must have subsequently become reconciled, as Columba, before his departure from Ireland, paid a farewell visit to St. Finbarr at Moyville. There, according to the old Irish Annals, St. Finbarr died at a great age on September 10th, 578 A.D. The *Martyrology of Aberdeen* says he died in the land of Cat, "among that fierce people." Though to Dornoch people of to-day he may be only a shadowy figure in the dim and distant past, his memory has been preserved in the name Templebar given to the site of the old Celtic Church dedicated to him, which survived until the early seventeenth century; in St. Barr's Fair, held until within recent years; as also in Davochfin, near Dornoch, and in Cnoc Var, to which, according to an old local tradition, the saint was wont to retire for meditation and prayer. An old custom of invoking the blessing of St. Barr upon new fishing nets survived in this district until last century.<sup>12</sup>

The *Menologium Scoticum* states that Cailten was an abbot in Sutherland. He may have been a suc-

cessor of St. Barr. The names of other monks associated with the work of the Dornoch *muinntir* after St. Barr's time are those of Demhan, Callen, and Machlie. An old legend contains a reference to the evangelization of Caithness of sufficient interest to merit quotation. It is to the effect that "Devenick went over to Caithness, to folk who were without the truth, and he prospered so well in short time there that he made them perfect in God's lore." As the patron saint of Creich, Devenick must have laboured in this district, most likely in connection with the *muinntir* at Dornoch.

In the absence of any record evidence as to the life and work of the early Christian community at Dornoch, some idea of it may be formed from the knowledge we possess regarding the Pictish Church as a whole and its centres elsewhere. It was quite independent of the Church of Rome, from which it differed in respect that the tonsure of its priests was frontal instead of coronal, that it observed a shorter Lenten fast, had a different date for the celebration of Easter, and celebrated mass in the language of the people. Its organization was tribal instead of parochial, and consisted of societies of ecclesiastics devoted to meditation, prayer, and the study of God's Word, whose chief aim was the spread of the Gospel in the districts where they were established.

The head of each *muinntir* was the Abbot, who was invested with supreme authority, and maintained strict discipline. Subject to him also were the bishops, whose chief function was the ordination of

presbyters, and whose position in the Church was a subordinate one. The work assigned to each of the brethren was suited to his age and capacity. The older monks conducted the church services and copied manuscripts; those whose strength was equal to such employment engaged in agriculture, handicrafts, and other work about the settlement. The younger monks were occupied with their studies, and much attention was given to their education. The Bible was the chief subject of study; Greek and Latin were also included. The college in connection with the settlement was open to the youth outside of it, and many enjoyed its advantages. Daily services were held at canonical hours and at such other times as the Abbot might appoint. The Eucharist was celebrated on each Lord's Day and on Saints' Days. Easter was the most important festival of the year, and the Nativity was also commemorated. On special occasions the Abbot summoned the brethren for worship, sometimes even in the dead of night and winter. The monks, who dressed plainly and lived simply, had for their ordinary food oatmeal bread, milk, fish, and eggs. Generous hospitality was always extended to strangers; for such a guest house was provided. The dress of the monks consisted of a coarse woollen robe with hood, a white undergarment, and sandals; these they always removed at meals.

The buildings of the Early Celtic Church were mainly constructed of wood and wattle, though there is evidence to prove that stone was used at a very





A BEE-HIVE CELL



REMAINS OF AN EARLY CELTIC CHURCH



early date. On Iona and Eilean na Naomh are the ruins of very ancient church buildings, which shed some light upon the character and arrangement of structures belonging to the Early Celtic Church. The buildings attached to each settlement consisted of a church surrounded by a churchyard, an Abbot's house on a higher site overlooking a group of huts for the monks and bee-hive cells for the anchorites, a kitchen where the food was cooked, and a refectory where the brethren dined together. The whole group was enclosed by a wall of earth and stone. Outside the enclosure stood the mill and the kiln, where the grain was threshed and dried. Adjoining the settlement was the garden, where vegetables were grown, and near by lay the land which the monks cultivated. An indispensable adjunct was the well which afforded the water supply.

The church was a plain rectangular building devoid of architectural beauty. In this part of the country it was probably built of stone, and had a roof of logs thatched with heather. It consisted of one chamber, measuring on an average 21 ft. by 12 ft., with only one door on the west and one window above the altar in the east gable. The church had sometimes a sacristy built on to it. The wattle huts of the monks were erected by setting up substantial uprights and connecting them by interlacing branches, thus forming an outer wall, which had an inner one of the same character, while the space between them was filled with turf or clay, thus producing a fairly substantial enclosing wall that, when roofed with thatch,

made quite a comfortable dwelling. The bee-hive houses had stone walls, which rose vertically to a certain height, and then converged by means of overlapping stones to form a dome-shaped roof. Each house had a low doorway with inclining sides, a small window, and one or more square recesses in the wall.

This slight sketch of the buildings associated with the Early Celtic Church may enable us to form some idea of the appearance presented by the early Christian settlement at Dornoch. Its site has been identified. The discovery, over twenty years ago, of traces of the old dry-built cells of the monks by workmen who were digging the foundations of an extension to the old school, proves beyond doubt that the rising ground upon which the old school stands was the site of Dornoch's earliest ecclesiastical settlement.<sup>15</sup> It was an ideal situation, and we can picture in our own minds the group of primitive structures clustered on the slope, the Abbot's house somewhat higher up than the huts of the monks and nearer Bishopfield, which, no doubt, was the land they cultivated. The mill and kiln in all probability stood beside the burn (which before its diversion took a more easterly course at that point) on a piece of land to the east of the Masonic Buildings, that afterwards came to be known as Kilncroft. The old well to the east of the Carnegie Library may have been that from which the monks drew their supply of water for the needs of the brotherhood. The old church of St. Barr stood in the east section of the old churchyard that for many centuries bore the Saint's name. Its survival until

the 17th century proves it to have been a substantial building. All outward traces of the old settlement have long ago disappeared; but scientific excavation of its site might lead to further interesting discoveries. Any records that might have shed some light upon the good work that was carried on there for centuries have long since perished, and imagination only can picture the daily activities of that little community of earnest and devoted men, who made Dornoch a centre of light and culture in those remote days.

In the neighbourhood of Achormlarie there are two old place-names (*Achenecolais*, Churchfield; and *Allt-an-t-Sagairt*, The Priest's Burn) that suggest the existence there in ancient times of a small church served by a member of the Dornoch *muinntir*. Some traces of the foundation of an old building still remain.

The ninth century was a most important period in the history of Scotland. In that century the Pictish Church was superseded by the Columban Church whose supremacy was largely due to King Nechtan's conversion to the usages of the Roman Church, his issue of an edict in 710 A.D. enjoining the Pictish clergy to conform to the practice of that Church, and the expulsion in 717 A.D. of the clergy who refused to comply. What contributed further to the decay and downfall of the Early Celtic Church was the introduction of secular clergy in the eighth century, a growing laxity in the constitution and practice of the Church, the degeneracy of the priesthood into a hereditary caste, and finally the union in 844 A.D. of the Scottish and Pictish kingdoms under Kenneth

MacAlpin, who favoured the Columban Church. In process of time the spiritual duties of the *muinntir* were relegated to the Culdees, of whom there were twelve, with a Prior at their head. Skene assigns the origin of Culdeeism to the eighth century, after the expulsion of the Pictish clergy by King Nechtan. It was a reaction from the decline of monastic observance, and at first the Culdees were ascetics; but in course of time they too abandoned their original code of asceticism, and became lax and worldly. In the eleventh century celibacy was no longer practised by the clergy, and abuses crept into the Church, which had a baneful effect upon it, and led to its downfall. This was hastened by Queen Margaret's devotion to the Church of Rome, whose ritual she determined to introduce into the Scottish Church. She insisted upon the abolition of the old form of celebrating mass in the vernacular tongue, and a more reverent observance of the Lord's Day, which does not appear to have been a day of complete rest from manual labour in the Celtic Church. In the twelfth century the monastic orders of the Church of Rome took the place and appropriated the endowments of the Celtic Church, and the Culdees were suppressed or transformed into monasteries of the Roman Church. That, however, took some time, especially in the North, where the change met with a stubborn resistance, and the passing of the native Church was gradual. At Dornoch it survived until the thirteenth century, and this is all the more wonderful when we remember that for centuries the community there was exposed to



Viking invasions, which disorganized its work and greatly impoverished its resources.

The story of the Norse invasions of Caithness and Sutherland is told in the Orkney Sagas, which contain the only written record of Sutherland till the twelfth or thirteenth century. On this account they are of great interest, though they cannot always be regarded as absolutely reliable. The invasions extended over a period of about three hundred years, from c. 870 A.D. until after the middle of the thirteenth century. Their origin is to be traced to the pressure to which Charlemagne in the eighth century subjected the Saxons, whose retreat westward drove the inhabitants of Norway to its western shores, where the land was too poor to support the congested population that crowded there. This led the Norsemen to make raids upon the opposite coasts of Shetland, Orkney, and the mainland, which they later seized and held for a time.

The first Norse Jarl to establish his authority on the mainland was Thorstein the Red, who, c. 874 A.D., subdued "Kataness and Sudrland," as *Landnamabok* records. His rule lasted but for one year, as, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, he was murdered "per dolum" in 875 A.D. by the people of Alba. Twelve years later Sigurd the Powerful conquered Sutherland as far south as Ekkialsbakki.<sup>14</sup> The *Orkneyinga Saga* give a full account of his encounter with Maelbrigda at a conference they had arranged somewhere south of the Dornoch Firth. Fearing treachery Sigurd brought eighty men with him instead of forty as had been agreed. Maelbrigda, who had kept faith, per-

ceiving that his force was outnumbered, gallantly ordered an attack upon the Norsemen, who, overwhelming their opponents, defeated and slew them. Sigurd, elated by his victory, rode back to his headquarters at Sidera with Maelbrigda's head hanging at his saddle-bow, and as he was spurring his horse, his leg was chafed by a bucktooth in the chieftain's head. Blood-poisoning set in, and Sigurd died at Cyderhall. He was buried at Cnoc Skardi, a twin-topped hillock in the neighbourhood, where there is nothing to mark his last resting-place. "Thenceforward," as Prof. Hume Brown says, "the mainland was never secure from the attacks of successive jarls, who for long periods held firm possession of what is now Caithness and Sutherland." For some years after Sigurd's death the Vikings abandoned themselves to violence and rapine. "They slew and robbed men," says Anderson's *Ork. Saga*.

Sigurd the Stout was another jarl who harassed the north mainland, and the *Earl's Saga* claims for him that "he held by main force Katness against the Scots." His second marriage was with a daughter of Malcolm II., King of Scots, who seems to have bestowed upon him the earldom of Caithness and Sutherland. He led an army composed of men from Cat and Orkney to help the Danes in Ireland, and was slain at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014 A.D.

Sigurd was succeeded by his son, Thorfinn, regarding whom *St. Olaf's Saga* gives this information<sup>15</sup>:—"Thorfinn, Sigurd's son, was five winters old when Earl Sigurd fell. When (Sigurd's) fall was made known to the Scottish King, the King gave to

Thorfinn Caithness and Sutherland, and with them the title of Earl, and set men to govern the dominion with him. Thorfinn was precocious in growing up immediately to full manhood. He was big and strong (and) an ugly man; and as soon as his age increased, it was evident that he was an ambitious man, hard and cruel, and very wise." It adds that "Thorfinn remained ever in Caithness and in Scotland." Thorfinn's refusal to pay tribute to his cousin, King Duncan, led to the great fight at Torfness, on the south side of Baefjord, which was won by Thorfinn, whose army included "all the men he had been able to collect in Caithness, Sutherland and Ross." There has been a great diversity of opinion as to the modern equivalent of Torfness, which has been identified with both Burghead and Tarbetness. It all depends upon the locality of Baefjord. If, as seems probable, Baefjord was the name given by the Norse to the Dornoch Firth as contrasted with the Kyle of Fleet, then Tarbetness was, undoubtedly, the scene of the battle. The *Icelandic Annals* record that Sweyn, Olaf's son, harried Scotland and plundered the coasts of Sutherland about 1139 A.D.

The Pictish inhabitants of Sutherland could not withstand their Norse foes, who were better equipped for war, and were trained fighters. Content at first with sporadic descents upon the coast of Sutherland for booty, they appear in course of time to have settled to some extent upon the more fertile lands by the sea, from which they drove the native population to the higher grounds. Their marriage with Pictish wives produced a mixed race in which the Celtic

element predominated, a Celtic people with a strong infusion of Scandinavian blood, whose language was Gaelic with a mixture of Norse words. The Norse influence upon the Gaelic of Sutherland remains to the present day. Though there are no structures in the county whose erection and occupation can be traced to the Vikings, many of the place-names along the coast owe their origin to them. They are to be found in the lower parts of the valleys and along the seaboard, thus affording evidence that this was the area they occupied, while the Picts retained possession of the uplands. The author of the *History of the Province of Cat* says with reference to the occupation of Caithness and Sutherland by the Norsemen that "they were colonists rather than conquerors in Cat."<sup>16</sup> Though they seized land and lorded it over the Picts near the seaboard, they never really subdued them and held them down for any length of time.

Nearly four centuries of oppression and violence must have imposed untold hardship and suffering upon the inhabitants of the Province of Cat, whose proximity to the coast exposed them to the assaults of the Norsemen. The situation of Dornoch, and the presence there of a monastic settlement, rendered it peculiarly liable to attack by the Vikings, actuated, as they were, not only by their love of booty, but also by their hatred of Christianity as opposed to paganism, and as the religion of the Emperor responsible for their eviction from their own country. That deep-rooted desire for revenge may have been the motive that

inspired their repeated ravaging of Iona and other centres of the Christian faith. What these early monastic settlements must have suffered from the violence and cruelty of the Vikings may be judged from a petition which found a place in the Litany of the Early Celtic Church:—"A furore Normannorum libera nos Domine," *i.e.*, "From the fury of the Norsemen deliver us, O Lord!" St. Finbarr's community at Dornoch must have been at the mercy of their savage foes during those centuries of Norse invasion, and what the monks had to endure cannot be conceived. The marvel is that the community weathered the storm and maintained its existence. Repeatedly ravaged and plundered, its resources must have been sadly impoverished, and its numbers were so diminished that, early in the thirteenth century, only one priest is found serving in the church of St. Barr. Constant harassment by the Vikings meant for the little community at Dornoch paralysis of its work, destruction of its property, and disorganisation of its discipline, which reduced it to such a condition of poverty and weakness as rendered it unable to resist the growing power of the Roman Church, which, notwithstanding the tenacious adherence of the people of Caithness and Sutherland to their old native church, gradually attained to a position of supremacy in the North. But it must not be forgotten that it was the Early Celtic Church that kept burning through centuries of storm and stress the light which St. Ninian and his missionaries brought into this remote corner of Scotland.

*CHAPTER III*

## MEDIEVAL TIMES

THE period of sixty years between 1093 A.D. and 1153 A.D. was one of the most eventful in the history of the Scottish Church. No other period save that of the Reformation can be compared to it. During the reign of David I changes of the most momentous character occurred. His policy was to consolidate his kingdom by the introduction of feudalism and the establishment of the Roman Church. In pursuance of this policy the "sair sanct for the crown" founded bishoprics in Glasgow, Dunblane, Aberdeen, Ross and Caithness. The exact date of the erection of the bishopric of Caithness is not known; but it must have been about 1146 A.D. A few years previous to that, the King had shown his interest in the welfare of religion in the far North by issuing a mandate to the Earls of Orkney and Caithness, c. 1136 A.D., "to respect and maintain free from injury the monks at Durnach, their servants and property."<sup>1</sup> This document is of supreme interest and importance as the first historical record with reference to this part of the country, and the first document in which the name "Durnach" appears. It proves the survival at that date of the monastic settlement at Dornoch notwithstanding the sore vicissitudes through which it had passed, and its need for protection from the dangers



that still assailed it. That these were many and great may be gathered from the fact that the precarious situation of this isolated Christian community had excited the pity of the King, who, concerned as to their safety, sought to give them what protection he could. The monks at Dornoch were evidently Culdees, as Henry de Silgrave's Chronicle records that in the 12th century the Episcopate of Caithness was wholly Culdee. The transition from the Celtic to the Roman Church was gradual, and extended over a period of about one hundred years. Though the change was in most places effected quietly, it met with vigorous resistance in those centres which had Culdee settlements. That may account for the selection of Halkirk as the first seat of the bishopric of Caithness. There the Early Celtic Church had hitherto held undisputed sway, and though weakened by internal decay, lack of organization, and Viking invasions, it had a strong hold upon the affections and loyalty of the people, who appear to have resented the intrusion of the Roman Church. To this may be attributed, to some extent, the tragic happenings that cast a shadow over its early career in its most northerly diocese.

The first bishop of whom there is any historical record was Andrew, a monk of Dunfermline, a man of considerable property, and a favourite at Court. He appears to have spent most of his time in attendance on the King, and was seldom in his diocese. In 1150 King David made him a grant of land in the near neighbourhood of Dornoch to which the name Hoctor

Common is given.<sup>2</sup> The modern equivalent is Achinchanter. A special interest attaches to this the earliest recorded transference of land in Sutherland. It proves that at that date the King had been able to establish his authority in the district. The land gifted may have been the property of the Early Celtic Church which the King made over to her more powerful rival: the grant was made free of all service except in the common army. Bishop Andrew about the same time made a grant to the monks of Dunfermline of the Church of the Holy Trinity at Dunkeld, with all its pertinents, for the weal of the soul of King David, his predecessors and successors, and of his own soul.<sup>3</sup> This gift was confirmed in after years by King Malcolm IV, and also by Gregory, Bishop of Dunkeld. His charter was witnessed by Bishop Andrew and by Murethac, who is designated "the clerk of the Bishop of Katenes." The bishop's name appears as a witness in the charter which King David granted to Deer. About the year 1181 A.D. Bishop Andrew witnessed the grant made by Harold, Earl of Caithness and Orkney, to the See of Rome of a yearly payment of one penny from each inhabited house within the earldom of Caithness.<sup>4</sup> We gather from a letter addressed some years later to the Bishops of Orkney and Ross that the Earl made this grant "for the redemption of his sins," and that it was to be "collected for alms and sent to Rome." The duty assigned to the bishop of enforcing this payment became a source of trouble afterwards. Bishop Andrew was apparently a man of great ability and

learning. He is quoted by the author of "De Situ Albanie" as an authority upon the geography of his native land. His death occurred at Dunfermline, and is thus recorded in the Chronicle of Melrose:—"In the year 1185, Andrew, of pious memory, the bishop of Caithness, died at Dunfermline on the third day before the Kalends of January," *i.e.* on 30th December, 1184 A.D.<sup>5</sup>

The vacancy thus created in the bishopric was soon thereafter filled by the appointment of Bishop John, whose name appears in a charter he witnessed in 1187 A.D. He was elected in 1185 A.D. His refusal to enforce payment of Earl Harold's tax upon the Caithness people for his annual contribution to the Roman See showed that he had a strong sense of justice, a warm sympathy for his oppressed people, and a spirit of independence that made him risk the displeasure of both the Earl and the Pope rather than follow a course his conscience condemned. His championship of his people cost him dear, for thereby he incurred the censure of Pope Innocent III, who enjoined the bishops of Ross and Orkney to compel him, on pain of Church censure, to withdraw his opposition to the levying of the tax.<sup>6</sup> Earl Harold's wrath was vented upon him, when he landed at Scrabster in 1201 A.D. and seized the bishop, who had come out to plead for his people. Whether at the Earl's instigation or not, the good man was cruelly mutilated and deprived of his speech and sight. These, however, according to the Saga, he miraculously recovered by a visit he paid to the tomb of St. Troll-

hæna at Restalrig. Bishop John is said to have survived his cruel treatment and lived until 1213 A.D.

Pope Innocent prescribed a severe penance for Lomberd, the perpetrator of the cruel outrage, though he pleaded that some of the Earl's men had forced him to do the deed.<sup>7</sup> He was condemned to walk for fifteen successive days through his native district barefooted, clad only in breeches and a short woollen garment without sleeves. He had rods in his hands, and his tongue extended was tied by a string that encircled his neck. He had to lie prostrate at the door of each church and undergo discipline with the rods he carried. He had to spend each day in silence and fasting until evening, when he was allowed to partake only of bread and water. At the expiry of the fifteen days he had to go to Jerusalem and there labour in the service of the Cross for three years, never more bear arms against Christians, and fast every Friday on bread and water unless excused by a bishop owing to bodily infirmity. Fordun's Annals record that the King, as soon as the outrage was reported to him, sent an army into Caithness to punish Earl Harold, who escaped to Orkney. Next spring, however, he was reconciled to the King at Perth, and having sworn to stand by the judgment of the Church in all things, and having paid the King 2000 pounds of silver, he was restored to his earldom. His Caithness subjects had to pay one-fourth of their property as a fine.

A still more terrible fate overtook the next occupant of the bishopric, who was evidently a very

different type of man from his predecessor. Bishop Adam, before his consecration in 1214 A.D., was for seven years Abbot of Melrose. According to the Orkney Saga he was a foundling who had been exposed at a church door, while another writer declares he was the son of Alexander III by his second wife, which Mr Cosmo Innes characterises as a "very glaring anachronism." King William apparently considered him fit to undertake the charge of so remote and disordered a diocese, which he appears to have ruled in a somewhat despotic fashion. Four years after his consecration Bishop Adam, along with the bishops of Moray and Glasgow, made a pilgrimage to Rome;<sup>8</sup> during his visit to that city he is said to have procured from Pope Honorius III a confirmation of the erection of his diocese.<sup>9</sup> Unlike his predecessor, who tried to protect his people from oppression, he aroused their resentment and indignation by excessive taxation. The payment of a span of butter for every twenty cows had been an old and established custom in Caithness. Not content with this allowance, Bishop Adam exacted the same quantity of butter for fifteen, then for twelve, and finally for ten cows. This was more than the people in their poverty could endure, and they complained to Earl John, who appealed in vain to the bishop for redress. An angry crowd assembled near the episcopal residence at Halkirk, which they surrounded. The Logmadr in vain besought the bishop to yield, and the Earl declined to intervene. Thereupon the infuriated mob attacked the house within which the bishop

and some friends were met. Among these was Serle, Dean of Newbattle, the bishop's confidential adviser, who, on going out to interview the enraged crowd, was slain, his dead body being hurled back into the house. Alarmed at the fate of his friend, the bishop begged Rafn, the Logmadr, to endeavour to make terms for him with the mob. The time for parley, however, had passed, and the people were beyond control. The bishop having come out to expostulate with them was stoned, mortally wounded by a blow from an axe, and his body was burnt, either in his own kitchen or in an adjoining hut. This awful tragedy occurred on Sunday, 11th September, 1222 A.D. The Orkney Saga records the terrible vengeance which King Alexander took upon the perpetrators of this dire outrage. Those directly responsible for it had their hands and feet cut off, while the land was laid waste and many of its inhabitants perished.<sup>10</sup>

The Pope, on hearing of the bishop's cruel death, wrote to three Scottish bishops a letter in which he thus describes his feelings of horror:—"Our soul was terrified, our heart trembled, and our ears shook with the dreadfulness of that iniquity." He expresses his satisfaction with the King's act, and "implores the mercy of God to be with him wherever he may be, and establish him for his heavenly kingdom to make him a great name, and bestow upon him rest from his enemies." The anxiety of the Roman Church to invest Bishop Adam with the halo of martyrdom appears in this quotation from the Chronicle of Melrose:—



“ In the same year (1222 A.D.) the father and notable pastor of pious remembrance, Sir Adam, bishop of Caithness, formerly Abbot of Melrose, and truly a monk of the Cistercian order, happily earned, as we believe, the attainment of fellowship with the citizens above, through the triumph of manifold suffering along with his fellow-monk, named Serle, a deacon of Newbattle. For it is not fitting to suppose him deprived, in the heavens, of the fellowship of those whose martyrdom he merited to share, while on earth : especially since he chose rather to die for strict justice, namely, for the exaction of tithes according to the custom of ecclesiastical taxation, and like the best Shepherd to give his life for the sheep rather than to permit the flock entrusted to him to continue longer in its former straying. Since the cause (which, rather than the pain, makes a martyr), sufficiently clear and just, came first, and the pain—a most cruel one—of suffering followed, he is proved to do the bishop wrong, who thinks that less honour or merit should be shown or ascribed to (Adam), than to any other of the holy martyrs, especially since he is known to have endured in one person many of the tortures of the holy martyrs. After the most cruel threats, and frequent revilings in words ; having endured both the stoning of Stephen, and the beating of James ; he was sacrificed entire as a burnt-offering to the Lord by the flames and the burning of St. Laurence.

“ He suffered at the Episcopal manor that is named, in the English tongue, Halkirk ; on the third day before the Ides of September, a Sunday. His

body was found, after the fire was extinguished, under a heap of stones : although parched by the burning, and blackened by the stoning, nevertheless entire. And it was committed to honourable burial, as was fitting, beside the holy altar in the baptismal church. And so the father, whom infamous and degenerate sons had most cruelly slain in his Mother's lap, was taken by a faithful daughter for protection to her bosom, to be produced again more happily, with glory, in the general resurrection."

The diocese was in such a condition of chaos and disorder after these tragic events that a strong, resourceful, and tactful man was needed to take charge of its affairs and restore it to order. The right man for this dangerous and difficult task was found in Gilbert de Moravia, Archdeacon of Moray, whose nobility of character, courage, and administrative gifts made him exceptionally qualified to deal with a situation that was too much for any ordinary man. The "*Scotichronicon*" gives him the credit for having in 1176 A.D., at the Council of Northampton, in presence of the Papal Legate and the Kings of Scotland and England, courageously and successfully defended the liberties of the Scottish Church, whose independence of the authority of the Archbishop of York he vindicated.<sup>12</sup> To his courageous advocacy of the rights of his Church on that occasion he is supposed to owe his rapid promotion in the Church, though his elevation to the bishopric did not occur until forty-seven years afterwards! That tradition has now been discredited, and the best authorities are

agreed that the champion of the liberties of the Scottish Church at Northampton could not have been the future bishop of Caithness. If they are identical, then Gilbert must have been about seventy years of age when he assumed the responsibilities of the bishopric. It is much more likely that he owed his appointment to his connection with the noble family of De Moravia, the head of which, Hugo Freskyn, had, as a reward for his military services, received a grant from the King of the vast tract of land comprising the modern county of Sutherland, which Earl Harold had forfeited. Out of this property Hugo Freskyn had made a grant to Gilbert of "the land of Skelbo in Sutherland and of Fernebuchlyn and Invershin, with the land of Sutherland towards the west which lies between these lands before-named and the boundaries of Ross." The charter granting Sutherland to Hugo Freskyn has not been preserved; but his grant to Gilbert of lands, described as part of the granter's lands of Sutherland towards the west, affords evidence that he owned that district. Sir Robert Gordon, in his "Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland," p. 28, says that he saw the original charter by Hugh Freskyn and its confirmation by William the Lion. Freskyn's charter<sup>13</sup> in favour of Gilbert, of date c. 1211 A.D., constitutes the first record of the De Moravia connection with Sutherland, which was destined to have an important bearing upon the future history of that part of the country. Though the charter affords no indication of relationship between Freskyn and Gilbert, that kinship prompted

the gift may be inferred from the fact that it was confined to Gilbert and his heirs "de parentela sua," and not to the church as his successors. The two first witnesses to the charter are "Wilelmo fre. suo, Andria fre. suo," the designation in each case being probably a contraction for "fratre suo." The other witnesses include "Ricardo de Moravia," who may have been Gilbert's brother, to whom on 26th December, 1235, the lands were transferred. The exact relationship between Hugo Freskyn and Gilbert is not easy to determine. Shaw in his "History of Moray" makes Hugo Freskyn the brother of Andrew de Moravia, Bishop of Moray, and also of Gilbert de Moravia and of Richard of Culbin; but there is no evidence to support this contention. The Register of Dunfermline makes it clear that they could only have been cousins. A brochure on the "Ancestry of St. Gilbert of Dornoch" suggests that Alexander de Moravia, father of Murdac and grandfather of Gilbert, was also the father of Freskyn, who had three sons, Hugh, William, and Andrew. If that can be established, then it follows that Gilbert and Richard, his brother, were nephews of Hugo Freskyn, and that his sons, William, Earl of Sutherland, and Andrew, Bishop of Moray, were their cousins. So close a relationship at once explains Earl William's anxiety for his cousin's promotion to the bishopric of Caithness and Gilbert's readiness to undertake the spiritual charge of a diocese, however remote and disturbed, where he already had vested interests, and could depend upon the support of his powerful kinsman.

The exact date of Gilbert's election is not known. Fordun relates that it took place in presence of King Alexander II and his army, which is quite possible, as the King had come north to punish those responsible for the murder of Bishop Adam. According to Theiner, he was nominated to the bishopric in 1222 A.D.; but not until 1224 A.D. was confirmation from Rome given. "He was elect," as an old writer tells us, "with the assent of all the clergy and laity." Gilbert's election to the bishopric inaugurated a new era for the Roman Church in the diocese of Caithness. At the outset he earned the gratitude and favour of the people by pleading with the King for some mitigation of the drastic punishment he had imposed upon them. That he was a Celt like themselves, and spoke their language, made him more acceptable to them. Having restored order in his diocese, he set himself to reorganise it. His decision to transfer the seat of the diocese from Halkirk of grim memories to the more peaceful neighbourhood of Dornoch was based upon various considerations. There were weighty reasons in favour of the change, besides the tragic fate of his predecessors and the turbulent condition of Caithness.

Dornoch had much to commend it to the new bishop, for in its neighbourhood lay his own lands of Skelbo, and Dunrobin Castle, the stately residence of his noble kinsman, William, Thane of Sutherland, upon whose protection and support he could rely. Then there was the situation of Dornoch on the shores of the sea across whose waters lay his old home on the

fertile plains of Moray. And not the least attractive feature of Dornoch, to such a man as Gilbert, must have been its past history as the centre of Christian light and effort for many centuries. All these considerations combined to invest Dornoch with an irresistible appeal for Gilbert, and made it easy for him to select it as the centre of the great work to which he had set his hand.

The Culdee community there had become so impoverished in numbers and resources that Gilbert found, as he himself records, only one priest serving the altar in the old church of St. Barr. If any other members of the community were left to carry on other departments of its work, there is no mention of them. It has been suggested that the monastic settlement there was transformed into an organization of the Roman Church: but of this there is no evidence. The coming of Bishop Gilbert meant the passing of the Early Celtic Church in Dornoch, though its place of worship remained for centuries. It "was in our dayes demolished," says Sir Robert Gordon. Having restored order in his diocese, and for its more orderly and efficient working divided it into parishes, Bishop Gilbert resolved to build at his own expense a Cathedral in Dornoch, and to erect it into a conventual church. One of the earliest Sutherland charters is the constitution which Bishop Gilbert framed for the chapter of his diocese.<sup>14</sup> This most interesting document, the original of which is kept in a good state of preservation at Dunrobin, bears no date; nor does the intention expressed by the Bishop to append his







own seal and signature appear to have been carried out. It is modelled upon the constitution of Lincoln Cathedral, as was that of Moray; but it differs from the latter in respect that the Bishop of Caithness was head of his chapter and did not, as in the case of Moray, sit there as an ordinary canon. Provision was made for ten clergy, of whom five were dignified. These were the Dean, the administrative head of the chapter; the Precentor, who had charge of the music; the Chancellor, whose duties were mostly of a literary nature; the Treasurer, who was the custodian of the treasures of the church; and the Archdeacon, whose chief duty was to visit the churches in the diocese and to supervise the local clergy. Fourteen of the parish churches were assigned for the maintenance of the canons, while six were reserved for the bishop. To the parish of Durness, with its great deer forests, was given the duty of making provision for the lighting of the church. The Dean had for his prebend the church of Clyne, the great tithes of the city of Dornoch and the town of Embo, with a fourth of the altarage of Dornoch, and the whole land of Nethandurnach. The Precentor had the church of Creich, the parsonage tithes of Pronsy, Evelix, Achormlary, Asdale, and Rearquhar, besides the fourth of the altarage of Dornoch, and the whole land of Huetherhinche or Achinchanter at Dornoch. To the Chancellor was given the church of Rogart, the parsonage tithes of the twelve davachs of Scelleboll (Skelbo), and a fourth of the altarage of Dornoch. The Archdeacon had for his prebend the

churches of Bower and Watten. Among the un dignified canons were divided the churches of Orlig, Dunnet, and Canisbay; while in common they had the churches of Far and Skinnet, the lands of Pitgrudi, the two Herkhenys, and the common pasturage of Dornoch. To the Abbot of Scone, who was a canon, though not bound to reside in Dornoch, was assigned the church of Kelduninach (Kildonan). The Bishop's Vicar was given, with the consent of the chapter, the teindsheaves of Torboll and Kynald, and twenty acres of land at Dornoch, with a toft and croft there. The bishop also provided for the payment of a salary of one hundred shillings to his clerk, William Ross, and of three marks to Eudo, his chaplain. Fines were to be exacted from the canons for absence from duty without leave from the bishop or chapter, and these were to be devoted to the maintenance and decoration of the cathedral. Any canon who did not respond to the summons of the bishop or chapter "to come and give his advice or counsel for the defence of the church" was deprived of his prebendal revenue until he gave satisfaction or a canonical excuse. Each of the seven priests serving in the cathedral was every day to celebrate divine service unless canonically prevented, and the priests and deacons had to be present at "every hour each day," unless absent from sickness or by leave of the bishop or dean. The constitution ends with a prayer invoking the peace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the canons and vicars serving God faithfully in the church, while upon those who "distract and injure" he invokes the

wrath and indignation of Almighty God in eternal damnation. The constitution is a tribute to Gilbert's masterly organisation of his extensive diocese, which was co-extensive with the modern counties of Caithness and Sutherland.

Bishop Gilbert wisely chose for his cathedral a site closely adjoining that of the church of St. Barr, on ground that had been consecrated by the worship of centuries. The stone for building was found in quarries in the near neighbourhood, while the glass for the windows, as Sir Robert relates, was made at Cyderhall. It would be interesting to know where he got his masons, whose marks on the central pillars have been revealed by the recent baring of the old stone-work of the thirteenth century. The cathedral took twenty years to build, and when completed consisted of a nave, with two transepts, a choir, and a massive tower supported by four fine clustered pillars and pointed arches richly moulded. The church must have been, in its original state, a fine example of the Transitional Style of architecture that came into vogue about that time. It was a period of great activity in church building, during which Lincoln and Elgin Cathedrals were also erected. Though Dornoch Cathedral cannot vie with these in grandeur and beauty, its erection, under adverse conditions, in a remote part of the country just emerging from the barbarism of past ages, was a lasting tribute to the courage, enterprise, and resourcefulness of its pious founder and builder. The hitherto accepted tradition that the cathedral was

completed in St. Gilbert's day has been somewhat shaken by recent expert opinion, that the ruins of the nave, as depicted in Cordiner's Sketch, suggest the architecture of the 14th or 15th century, to which the Bishop's Palace must also be assigned. No doubt the erection of the cathedral would be Gilbert's first care, and would so fully occupy his episcopate, along with the administration of his diocese, that no time would be available for the building of a palace. Nor was one needed, as he had his own castles of Skibo and Skelbo within easy riding distance of Dornoch. An old site immediately to the west of the Cathedral was known in past centuries as the "Bischopis Lichting Place," and may have marked the spot where the bishop used to dismount, and where his horse was stabled. His castle of Skelbo would not be available after 1235 A.D., as in that year he transferred his lands of Skelbo, &c., to his brother Richard, who made Skelbo Castle his residence. Skibo would thus be the Bishop's headquarters.

In 1239 A.D. the remains of Bishop Adam were removed by Gilbert from their resting-place in front of the altar of the church of Skinnet, and were re-interred with great ceremony in Dornoch Cathedral, the construction of which must have been well advanced to permit of that.<sup>15</sup> It was a great occasion, and, according to an old Chronicle,<sup>16</sup> it was marked by incidents of a supernatural character, "*Facta sunt miracula non pauca.*"

No details are available of Gilbert's episcopate, which, we may assume, was mainly occupied with



the reorganisation and administration of his diocese and the erection of his cathedral church. Amidst his many activities he appears to have found time for literary work, if Dempster's statement be correct that he wrote "*Exhortationes ad ecclesiam suam*" and "*De Libertate Scotiæ.*" There is a tradition, too, that he translated the Psalms and Gospels into Gaelic for the benefit of his people; but for this there is not too good authority.

In addition to the work of his own diocese he appears to have rendered service further afield. In 1224 he served on the Commission which decided upon the transference of the See of Moray from Spynie to Elgin. Along with the Abbot of Kinloss and the Dean of Rosmarkyn he had been appointed "to consider and determine regarding the translation of the See of Moray to a better place, it being now so solitary that nothing can be bought." That same year, in response no doubt to an invitation from his kinsman, Andrew, Bishop of Moray, he officiated at the dedication of the foundation stone of Elgin Cathedral. In 1225 he witnessed the settlement of a dispute between Andrew, Bishop of Moray, and Robert Hode regarding the manor of Lamanbrid.<sup>17</sup> In 1239 Pope Gregory empowered the bishops of Glasgow, Moray, and Caithness to confirm or annul the election of the Abbot of Arbroath to the episcopate of Aberdeen, and that same year he was one of the three bishops appointed to inquire into the election to the bishopric of St Andrews of Master David of Birnam, Sub-deacon, Chamberlain of Scotland, and they were

given direction to affirm or annul it. These commissions are evidence of the implicit trust reposed by Rome in the judgment and discretion of Bishop Gilbert. It has been asserted that he held the office of Chamberlain of Scotland; but that statement is not supported by evidence. He appears, however, to have been entrusted with the administration of the affairs of the Crown in the vast territory to the north of the Mounth, and to have achieved a great work in bringing the whole of that district into subjection to the Sovereign. He built the famous old Castle of Kildrummy in Aberdeenshire, as also that of Scrabster near Thurso.

He made his will in 1242 A.D., according to Sir Robert Gordon, who saw the document.<sup>18</sup> On the first of April, 1245 A.D., the good bishop passed to his rest in his palace of Scrabster, "being verie aged," as Sir Robert Gordon says, "and wes according to his owne appoyntment buried at the cathedrall church in Dornogh, wher his buriall place is to be sein at this day, directlie under the steiple, as yow enter into the queer."<sup>19</sup>

Bishop Gilbert was one of the greatest churchmen of his day. His statesmanship, his administrative gifts, his scholarship, his attractive personality, his indomitable courage and deep piety, all combined to make him one of the noblest and wisest ecclesiastics the Medieval Church produced. It was fitting that his Church should bestow upon him the highest honour in her power by adding his name to the roll of her saints. Never was the honour of canonization more

worthily bestowed. He was the last Scotsman to whom a place was given in the Kalendar of Saints, and his festival on the first of April is entered in the Scottish Prayer-Book of 1637. After his death his cathedral was dedicated to the Virgin and St. Gilbert, and he became the patron saint of the little city that owed to him its birth. To this day his memory is cherished by the older natives, who always refer to him as "Gileabart Naomh," *i.e.* "Holy Gilbert," while they speak of him in English as "The Blessed Gilbert." An old native recently interrogated as to where he had been, replied that he had just come from "Sgiath Ghileabart," one of the old sanctuary bounds instituted in Gilbert's day to which the old people had given the appropriate name of "Gilbert's Shield."

His collect as given in the Aberdeen Breviary is as follows:—"O God, who didst vouchsafe to distinguish the blessed bishop Gilbert by many healing of sick men, and by the gift of miracles, grant that by his intercession we may be delivered from the weaknesses of soul and body, and attain to that glory which Thou hast bestowed on him, through our Lord. Amen." The prayer suggests some reference to the monkish legends that circle round his name, which are of interest, however incredible they may seem. According to one of them, he miraculously restored his account books which had been burnt by some malevolent persons. Another states that he restored speech to a dumb man by prayer and the sign of the cross. Another records a service he rendered a poor

salmon-fisher, who had been brought to the verge of ruin by a disastrous season. The Bishop, touched by the appeal the man made to him in his distress, washed his hands in the pool he was fishing, and brought him such a haul of salmon as averted the financial disaster that threatened him. The pool which is supposed to have been the scene of this wonderful incident is to this day known as "Gilbert's Pool." These legends may be characterised as monkish inventions, but they serve to show the veneration and regard in which the good bishop was held by the simple folk who in past generations inhabited the neighbourhood where he long ago lived and laboured. In all his work he had the warm support of the first Earl of Sutherland, a man of fine character and a good friend to the Church.

Of his successor, William, little is known save that along with other Scottish bishops he made a representation to King Alexander III concerning the liberties of the Church.<sup>20</sup> It is supposed that he held the bishopric for ten years, and died in 1261. If that belief is well founded, then it was probably during his episcopate that the Battle of Embo was fought. Various dates have been assigned to it, and it is not easy to determine which is the correct one. There is a local tradition that it happened before Bishop Gilbert's death in 1245, and that the bishop took part in it. If, as tradition says, it was the first Earl of Sutherland who acquitted himself so gallantly in that fight, it must have been prior to 1248, for in that year, as Sir Robert Gordon relates, the Earl died at Dunrobin, and "was buried in the south

yle of the cathedral church at Dornogh, which from thenceforth was the commoun buriall-place of the Erls of Southerland for the most pairt.” Sir Robert Gordon has given the following account of the Battle of Embo :—

“ About these tymes the Danes and Norwegians invaded Scotland, and sent some companies of men into the north pairts of the kingdom. These did land at the ferrie of Unes, with a resolution to invade Southerland and the neighbouring provinces; against whom, William Earle of Southerland sent his servant Richard Morray (the brother of St. Gilbert) with a company of men, to stay and hinder the Deans from spoyling the cuntrey, vntill he himselff had gathered the rest of the inhabitants to mak head against them. Richard finding the Danes negligent, as not expecting any resistance in this cuntrey, he was loth to stay for Erle William, or to slip any advantage, and so beginneth a cruell battle against them, at a place called Enbo, betueen the toun of Dorogh and the ferrie of Unes. The Danes perceaving Erle William coming with the rest of his forces to assist Richard, they flie quicklie, and mak heid towards ther navie. Earle William pursueth them eagerlie, over throweth them, slayeth ther generall with many others, and chaseth the rest to their shippis. In memorie whereof a monument was ther erected, which wes called Ree Croise, that is, the king or generall his crosse, and divers burialls are to be seen there at this day. Richard Morray was also slain in this battell; and for his good service in defence of his cuntrey, Earle William

caused a buriall place to be assigned vnto him in the queir of the cathedrall church at Dornogh, with his statue and wieve image armed at all pieces, maid of fyne stone, which doth remayn ther vnto this day.''<sup>21</sup>

Sir Richard de Moravia was probably in residence at his castle of Skelbo when the Earl summoned him to hold in check, with the few men at his disposal, the Norsemen, who had landed at Little Ferry to pillage the neighbourhood. Finding them encamped on the links between the ferry and Embo, and unexpectant of attack, he surprised them; but he had to give way before an enemy superior in numbers and equipment. He would naturally retire in the direction of Dornoch towards the route by which the Earl would come. The arrival of that nobleman with his force gave the Sutherland men the advantage, and the Norsemen were driven back towards the ferry, where their boats lay. During their retreat the Earl engaged the Danish leader in single combat, and, according to local tradition, having somehow been deprived of his sword, he seized a horse's leg with which he despatched his foe. To that incident Dornoch has for long been supposed to owe its name (*G. dorn*, fist, and *eich*, horse); but as the name occurs in the mandate of David I, c. 1136 A.D., its origin dates back at least one hundred years before the Battle of Embo. Another local tradition, for which there is no foundation, is that the Earl's Cross marks the spot where the duel between the Earl of Sutherland and the Norse leader was fought. This has arisen from the mistake of confusing it with the King's Cross to which Sir



Robert Gordon refers, which once stood near the south end of Embo Street, but has long since disappeared. The Earl's Cross, which appears, when intact, to have borne the Sutherland arms on one side and those of the bishop on the other, was simply a boundary mark between the lands of the Earl and those of the Church.

Sir Richard de Moravia, who so courageously withstood the Vikings and was killed in the fight, was the younger brother of Bishop Gilbert, and the cousin of Earl William, though Sir Robert designates him as the Earl's "servant," meaning thereby, no doubt, his vassal. His name appears in the list of witnesses to Hugh Freskyn's grant to Gilbert of the lands of Skelbo, which the Bishop transferred to Richard in 1235 A.D. He has been identified with the Richard de Moravia to whom the Abbot of Dunfermline granted the lands of Kildun, c. 1240, as the Register of Dunfermline records. There he is described as "filius Murdaci filii Alexandri de Moravia." He is said to have married Marjory, daughter and heiress of Alan of Lascelles, who had great estates in Fife.<sup>21a</sup> Nothing further is known of this brave man of a bygone age, who nobly did his duty. The stone sarcophagus in which he was laid to rest in the choir of the cathedral has survived the passing of seven centuries, and, though somewhat mutilated, is a fine specimen of the sepulchral art of the thirteenth century.

Walter de Baltrodin, who was appointed bishop in 1263, was a canon of Caithness before his elevation to the bishopric. The mandate issued by Pope

Urban IV to the Bishops of Dunkeld, Brechin, and Ross for his installation is preserved in the papal archives, and is dated June 13, 1263 A.D. It gives expression to the Pope's special anxiety for bereaved churches at a distance from the Roman See, and a desire to commit their supreme government to men of prudence and vigilance. The election by the Dean and chapter of Walter Baltrodin to the oversight of the church was declared to be contrary to the approved canonical form, and was annulled. The Pope, however, taking into account the poverty of the Church in Caithness, the expense of the journey, and the unanimity of the chapter, Walter's honesty of life, his integrity of morals, and his prudence and circumspection in spiritual and temporal affairs, gave a mandate to the bishops to examine his birth and attainments, and, if satisfied, to consecrate him to the bishopric. As he appears to have died c. 1270 A.D., his tenure of the bishopric was of short duration.

Nicholas, Abbot of Scone, was elected after Walter's death; but his election was cancelled by Pope Gregory X, "because that the said Abbot labours under a deficiency of knowledge intolerable in a prelate." The Pope granted licence for a new election on 4th June, 1273 A.D.<sup>22</sup>

Sir Patrick Murray is said to have founded in 1271 A.D. a monastery of Red or Trinity Friars in Dornoch, and it has been stated that after the English got possession of Berwick, the lands belonging to the Red Friars there were given to those at Dornoch. No authority is given for this statement; but, if it be

correct, we may assume that these monks would probably have been accommodated in the buildings that had belonged to the Early Celtic Church.<sup>22a</sup>

According to Mr R. S. Taylor another monastery, said to have been Franciscan, occupied a site at the south-east corner of the town on the road leading to the links. It must have been on or near to the ground on which the Free Church now stands. No information is available regarding these communities.

Archibald Hayrok, Archdeacon of Moray, was elected "per comprisum" in 1274 A.D. by the Dean, Patrick the Treasurer, and Roger de Castello, Canon of Caithness. In a mandate bearing the date November 1, 1274, Pope Gregory X gave authority to the Bishops of Moray, Aberdeen, and Argyle to consecrate him, which they did the following year. In that same year, on September 22, an agreement<sup>23</sup> was drawn up and sealed in the cathedral church of Dornoch between Bishop Archibald and William, Earl of Sutherland, regarding the possession of Skibo Castle and certain lands about which there had been a prolonged controversy between the Church and the Earls of Sutherland. It began in Gilbert's day, when an understanding was arrived at; but the dispute had not been actually settled. That the matter in dispute had been submitted to arbitration may be gathered from a statement in the agreement to the effect that "faithful men and eager for peace being prelates of the church and noblemen, both earls and barons, and not a few others of good name, compassionating the burdens and anxieties of the church of Caithness, and

the labours and outlays of the foresaid earl, interposed their earnest efforts with the zeal of disinterested friendship, so that peace and unity might be restored and perpetually established between the church of Caithness, us and our successors, and the foresaid noble Earl William and his heirs." The dispute appears to have been regarding part of the lands granted by Hugh Freskyn to Gilbert, c. 1212 A.D., and afterwards transferred by him to his brother by a charter dated December 26, 1235 A.D. It would seem as if Bishop Gilbert, contrary to the terms of Freskyn's grant, had alienated part of the estate from his own family to the Church, and that Freskyn's successors, objecting to this, had made a claim for its restoration to them as the original owners. The situation must have been a serious one to necessitate the intervention of a number of prelates and noblemen. Eventually, after many meetings and discussions, "the said earl, moved by the counsel of the said prelates, nobles, and worthy men, of his own free will granted to the church of Caithness and the bishop and his successors the Castle of Skibo, with the six davachs of land adjoining, the six davachs of Cyderhall with the passage, the two and a half davachs of Migdale, Swordale, and Creich, with the fishing of Bonar, and the two davachs of Monimor, with their pertinents. The "two davachs of Evelix, the three davachs of Proncy, the one davach of Rearquhar, the three quarters of Astle, the half davach of Achosnich, the three davachs of Torboll, the two davachs of Kinnauld, the four davachs of Laing, and the one davach of Cuthill" were to go to

the Earl and his heirs. There was further granted to the Earl and his heirs one davach of Unes to the value of half a merk on condition "that the said Earl and his heirs may present to us and our successors, who shall be for the time, one chaplain, who in all time coming shall say mass at the altar of St. James in the church of Dornoch for the souls of the said earl and his predecessors and successors." Five merks annually were to be assigned for the support of the said chaplain from the "fermes of our town of Dornoch." To this charter, the original of which is at Dunrobin, were affixed the seals of the Bishop, Dean, Archdeacon, Precentor, and Chancellor, along with those of the Earl and others; but they have all, unfortunately, gone. The date of Archibald's death is uncertain; it must have been before 1279 A.D.

During the episcopate of Bishop Archibald a new valuation was made of the property of the Church in Scotland in obedience to a decree of the Council of Lyons in 1274, that during the next six years a contribution should be made to the Crusades of one-tenth of all the Church revenues. Boiamund de Vicci was delegated to enforce the assessment, which came to be known as "Bagimont's Roll," and continued to be the basis of taxation on Church property until the Reformation. The tithes collected from the diocese of Caithness amounted in 1275 A.D. to £39 9s 4d, and in 1276 to £45 11s 10d.<sup>24</sup>

Richard, Dean of Caithness, was elected by the Chapter to the bishopric in 1279, and Canon Henry

de Notingham was sent to Rome as procurator. His mission was a failure, as he had to confess that the Dean had a son over thirty years of age, and was reported to have another, though Henry did not believe that. The Pope in his letter to the Bishops of St. Andrews and Aberdeen also states that he had been informed by others that the Dean was paralysed, and unable from age to discharge the duties of his office. He had also been guilty of an irregularity in procedure, inasmuch as he had failed to ask for confirmation of his appointment within the stipulated period of three months. The Pope requested the bishops to get him persuaded to resign, failing which he was to be cited to appear personally before the Pope to be examined as to his learning and bodily strength. The thought of such an ordeal was apparently too much for the Dean, who, rather than face it, resigned. In the papal missive a side-light is cast upon the procedure at a capitular election by the statement that the Dean said he had consented to the election, and was conducted to the high altar, and received the canons with the accustomed kiss.<sup>24a</sup>

The bishopric having become vacant by the Dean's resignation, Hervy de Donodei (Dundee), canon of St. Andrews, was appointed; but he died at Rome, whither he had gone for confirmation of his election, and Pope Martin IV, as was customary in such circumstances, without a capitular election appointed Alan de St. Edmund to the vacant bishopric. This happened prior to April 13, 1282 A.D., when his consecration was announced in a letter of that date. He



was within easy reach of the Vatican, as, at the time of his appointment, he was chaplain to the presbyter-cardinal of St. Lawrence in Lucina. He appears to have enjoyed the favour and confidence of King Edward I, who appointed him to the responsible office of Chancellor of Scotland. In 1291 Bishop Alan witnessed the oaths of fealty to the King of England taken by various persons, and had various mandates given to him by the King. One of these was the direction of letters<sup>25</sup> under the seal of Scotland to Simon Fresel, keeper of the forest of Selkirk, commanding him to send gifts of stags from the forest to various persons, including the bishop himself, who was to receive ten. That same year the King made "a mourning gift" to the bishop of forty seasoned oaks from the forest of Darnaway for the fabric of his Cathedral Church of Caithness.<sup>26</sup> The royal gift was in memory of King Alexander III and Queen Margaret, "his spouse and our sister." Whether this grant may be regarded as evidence in support of the theory that the fabric of the Cathedral was not completed in Bishop Gilbert's day, or whether it points to the need for repair of injury sustained by the sacred edifice through some unrecorded disaster, such as a Viking raid, cannot possibly be determined. Neither of these suggestions may account for the gift; and the wood may just have been intended for the adornment or furnishing of the interior of the Cathedral—possibly for the stalls of the choir.

Bishop Alan was one of the group of nobles and prelates who, on behalf of the community of Scotland,

addressed a letter to King Edward proposing a marriage between his son, Prince Edward, and the Maid of Norway.<sup>27</sup> Alexander III and Queen Margaret (Edward's sister) had a daughter married to Eric, King of Norway, and their only daughter Margaret had been proclaimed Queen of Scotland in 1286 A.D. The Scots were eager to welcome their Queen, but her father was slow in sending her to them. The marriage proposed between her and Prince Edward had the cordial approval of the King of England, as it accorded with his policy of maintaining his hold of Scotland. He sent two delegates, Henry of Rye and Thomas of Braytoft, to await the landing of the young Queen in Orkney. They met in conference with the representatives of the Scottish governors in Skelbo Castle on Sunday, October 1, 1290.<sup>27a</sup> There they received the sad tidings of Margaret's death on the voyage from Norway to Orkney. Thinking that her body might be brought to Scotland for burial, they resumed their journey northward, and arrived at Wick on October 3; but when they found that she was to be buried beside her mother in Norway, they returned south. It may be imagined how grieved Bishop Alan must have been at so tragic an ending to all his cherished hopes and plans. He must have passed to his rest soon thereafter, as, on January 20 following, King Edward granted the bishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow a warrant for the election of another bishop to take his place. Out of respect to his memory, and in recognition of his faithful services, the King granted to Bishop Alan's brother, parson of Restalrig, and to the



*Photo, by J. G. Phimister.*

**SKELBO CASTLE FROM THE S.E.**



*Photo, by J. G. Phimister*

**SKELBO CASTLE FROM THE S.W.**



Prior of Coldingham all the bishop's property in Scotland, which of right belonged to Edward I as overlord, for distribution as they might see fit.<sup>28</sup>

The King had ordered the Bishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow to commit the cure of the bishopric of Caithness to some clerk of that country obedient to the King, "who should be found sufficiently qualified for the office according to the custom in those parts."<sup>29</sup> That they experienced some difficulty in executing the royal commission, probably owing to the remoteness of the diocese, its inaccessibility, and other causes, may be gathered from the time that elapsed before the vacancy was filled.

Adam, Precentor of Ross, was next appointed to the bishopric, and was consecrated in April, 1296, by Hugo, Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia; but he never took up the duties of his office, as he died that same year at Siena.

Andrew, Abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Cupar, was appointed "ex proprio motu" by Pope Boniface VIII as Adam's successor. His appointment, dated St. Peter's, Rome, 17th December, 1296, sets forth the qualifications which led to his selection. They were "your laudable life and morals, your conspicuous and mature discretion, your prudence in spiritual matters, and circumspection in temporal affairs."<sup>30</sup> In the mandate issued by the Pope on August 1st, 1297, to the bishops of Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Ross for the consecration of Andrew, the Pope agrees to the petition on his behalf, "that on account of the distractions of wars imminent in these

parts, and the very grave risks and danger of the way, he do not come to the apostolic See for the gift of consecration.”<sup>31</sup> Of his brief occupancy of the See there are no details. His death must have occurred before June 16, 1304, when the King grants a safe conduct to his successor.<sup>32</sup>

To understand aright the reference to “the distractions of wars imminent in these parts” that made it dangerous for Bishop Andrew to travel to Rome, it must be borne in mind that the great struggle for Scottish Independence had just begun. John Balliol had abdicated the throne in 1296, and King Edward I had again assumed the government of Scotland. In 1300 he led an army northward to invade Scotland. In 1306 Robert Bruce became King, and without delay began his attempt to liberate Scotland from the English yoke. He marched with his army to the north of Scotland, and for a fortnight he ravaged the counties of Ross, Sutherland, and Caithness. Had a truce not been arranged they would have been utterly devastated. William, Earl of Sutherland, had, at King Edward’s request, assisted to maintain order in the country, and in a letter, dated April 4, 1304 A.D., Edward thanks the Earl for “his good faith and goodwill,” and promises him a reward for his services. Sir Robert Gordon, the historian of Sutherland, maintains a discreet silence with regard to his ancestor’s support of the English King; but he tells with apparent relish how the next Earl “manfullie assisted the valerous and victorious Bruce” at the Battle of Bannockburn, “and failed not his king and cuntrie in so great and imminent danger.”<sup>33</sup>



In 1297 A.D. King Edward had conferred the Archdeaconry of Caithness upon Ferquhard Belegambe, and in an order issued in July of that year he commands the keeper of the spirituality to induct him. Ferquhard was afterwards made Dean, and held that office when he was promoted to the bishopric. This we learn from the confirmation of his election by Pope Clement V on January 22, 1306.<sup>34</sup> Three canons, including the Abbot of Scone, had been delegated by the Chapter to make the election, and had unanimously chosen the Dean. He was given by Edward I on 16th June, 1304, a safe conduct as the bishop-elect of Caithness for his journey to Rome "on the business of his election."

Traces appear at this time of a collision between the temporal and ecclesiastical powers regarding the appointment of bishops, and of a suspicion on the part of the King that the Pope was encroaching upon his rights. The King took exception to certain words in the papal confirmation, which he regarded as prejudicial to his rights, and Bishop Ferquhard had on April 4, 1306 A.D., at Winchester, to renounce that part of the bull, and to acknowledge that he held the temporalities of the King, who then commanded the Guardians of Scotland to deliver them to Ferquhard. In 1310 A.D. the Bishop of Caithness appears to have joined with certain other Scottish prelates in acknowledging Robert Bruce as King of Scotland. In 1312 A.D. he affixed his seal to King Robert's confirmation of the treaty between Alexander III and Magnus of Norway regarding the Isles of Scotland, and he was

present that year in the Cathedral of St. Magnus, Kirkwall. During his episcopate King Robert granted a charter to the Church of St. Mary and St. Gilbert, Dornoch. There is no record of this charter, which probably confirmed the original constitution. The exact date of Bishop Ferquhard's death is not known; but, according to an entry in "Exchequer Rolls,"<sup>35</sup> the bishopric was vacant at Martinmas, 1327 A.D.

In the "Preface" to the same volume of "Exchequer Rolls" it is stated that "one of the yearly payments at Aberdeen was an offering by the King to the famous shrine of St. Gilbert of Dornock, a chalder of corn and a tun of wine *pro confecione corporis Christi*." The entry, under the year 1328, reads thus:—"et ecclesie sancti Gilberti de Dornach et ministris suis percipientibus ad festum Pentecoste tantum, pro j celdra frumentis et uno dolio vini."

In 1328 A.D. the Chamberlain of Scotland accounted to the King for part of the issues of the bishopric of Caithness during the vacancy of the See, and for fifty shillings paid to the Earl of Sutherland for the custody of the bishopric since Martinmas previous, as also for £8 paid to Herman for his service in the bishopric while in the King's hands.

Of the next few bishops little is known. Of David, who succeeded Ferquhard, Dr Maitland Thomson says, in "Bishops of Scotland," that "he apparently is never mentioned by name in Scottish record, but he is evidently the bishop who made a fine with the chamberlain in 1329, perhaps for entry to the temporalities."

Alan, Archdeacon of Aberdeen, was David's successor. He was elected by the Chapter of Caithness "per formam scrutinii," and was appointed by Pope Benedict XII. As he was only in deacon's orders he had to be raised to the priesthood, and was consecrated by the Bishop of Sabina. In his case the Pope departed from his usual custom of declaring the Chapter's election null and void. The Pope in his confirmation of Alan's election describes him "as a suitable person, endowed with knowledge of literature, honourable life and manners, and meritorious virtue as has been credibly reported to us."<sup>36</sup> As the deed of appointment is dated January 16, 1341, and Bishop Alan died before the end of 1342, his episcopate was a brief one. It is, indeed, extremely doubtful whether he took up the duties of his bishopric or ever returned from Rome, as the Pope, in appointing his successor, refers to Alan as having "paid the debt of nature in those parts."

Thomas de Fingask was appointed to the vacant bishopric by Clement VI on November 29, 1342 A.D., and prior to his election was Dean of Brechin, Canon of Caithness, as also of Aberdeen. Previous to his confirmation, Thomas, "for certain reasons, not, however, connected with your personal character, sisted proceedings" and renounced his right. He was then duly appointed by the Pope to the vacant See. Bishop Thomas was chosen by the clergy to treat with the King of England for the ransom of King David II, who had been taken prisoner at the Battle of Nevill's Cross. In April, 1348, and again in

August, 1357, to ensure him protection in the discharge of his mission, Edward III gave him a safe conduct for his journeys, on which, in the second instance, he was accompanied by the Bishop of Brechin, and escorted by forty horsemen. Their mission was successful, as in October the King was released on condition that hostages were given in security for his ransom. One of these was William, Earl of Sutherland, who was married to Margaret Bruce, the King's sister. Bishop Thomas died in 1360 A.D., and was buried in Elgin. We have this information on the authority of Sir Robert Gordon, who records that "in 1360, William, Earl of Sutherland, was appointed executor to Bishop Thomas Fin-gask by his late will, who died at Elgin, and was buried by Earl William in our Ladies Isle in the chanonry church of Elgyn under the bishop's seat."<sup>37</sup> In Pope Urban's appointment of his successor, he is said to have "closed his career as a stranger outwith the Roman Court."

In a dispensation granted on December 1, 1342, for the marriage of William, Earl of Sutherland, to Margaret, sister of King David II, reference is made to the fact that "very many wars, dissensions and causes of offence have arisen, through which slaughters, burnings, raidings, spoliations and other evils have frequently occurred and continually go on occurring, and many of the churches in these parts have sustained no small damage, and greater is yet to be feared, unless they are afforded some opportune relief."<sup>38</sup> The marriage was arranged "to put a stop to so many and so great perils."

In October, 1345 A.D., King David II erected the Earldom of Sutherland into a free regality. Fifteen years later Earl William gave his brother, Nicolas Sutherland, the barony of Torboll and Proncy. The charter conveying this gift is one of great interest, and was drawn up at Aberdeen, Thomas, Bishop of Caithness, being one of the witnesses. Nicolas Sutherland was the founder of the Duffus family. The lands included in the grant consisted of "the sixteen davachs of land lying within the earldom of Sutherland in the free barony which is called Torboll, one davach of Rearquhar, one davach of Astle, one davach of Over Proncy, one davach of Nether Proncy, and one davach of Proncy Croy, two davachs of Evelix, one davach of Grudiebrora, one davach of Sciberscross, one davach of Caen lying on the east side of the Water of Strathully, and one davach of Kilpheder lying on the west side of that water."<sup>39</sup> This grant was confirmed by King David II by a charter dated at Edinburgh, October 17, 1363.<sup>40</sup>

Malcolm was appointed to the bishopric by Pope Urban V on February 21, 1369 A.D. Before his election he had been a canon both of Caithness and of Orkney.<sup>41</sup>

Alexander, Canon of Moray and Archdeacon of Ross, became Bishop of Caithness before September, 1381, as in a papal mandate of that date reference is made to the voidance of the canonry of Moray by the consecration of Alexander, bishop elect of Caithness. On December 10, 1381, the Pope, in reply to his crave for leave to dispense fifty persons of illegitimate birth,

so that they might be ordained and hold a benefice, grants permission for twenty-five of his city or diocese.<sup>42</sup> The date of Alexander's death is not known, but it must have been before 1402 A.D. Keith gives 1395 as the date.

The next occupant of the See of Caithness was transferred from that of Sodor, c. 1402. There is no evidence that Bishop John discharged the duties of his northern diocese, and his appointment may have been ignored by the rival of Boniface IX, who was not recognised by the Church authorities of Scotland.

Alexander de Vaus, Archdeacon of Caithness, was next appointed to the bishopric by Pope Benedict XIII on May 4, 1414 A.D. He was translated to Whithorn on December 4, 1422 A.D. During his episcopate the Scottish Church withdrew its allegiance to the Anti-Popes of Avignon, whose cause they had espoused.

John de Crannoch, an M.A. and a bachelor in theology, was Dean of Ross when, on December 4, 1422, Pope Martin V appointed him to the bishopric of Caithness. His name appears in a warrant to the King's cousin, the Bishop of Winchester, for a safe conduct to Master John Cranok, Bishop of Caithness, and other dignitaries of the Church "ambassadors of the King of Scots, about to set forth with fifty servants and horses to the Roman Court."<sup>42a</sup> On June 7, 1426, he was translated to Brechin.

Robert de Strabok, a priest of the diocese of St. Andrews, was provided by Pope Martin V on June 4, 1427, and must have held the bishopric until October,



1444, for he witnesses a charter at Inverness on October 10 in that year.

About the middle of the fifteenth century, as Sir Robert Gordon records, Macdonald of the Isles with five or six hundred men encamped near Skibo Castle, where they were attacked and defeated by the Sutherland men, and afterwards, “on the sands of Strathfleet, wher ther folloed a sharp and cruell skirmish, foughtin with great courage on either syde.”<sup>43</sup> The pursuit of the Macdonalds continued “even to the Bonagh.”

John, 12th Earl of Sutherland, who succeeded his father in 1455 A.D., married the daughter of the Lord of the Isles. Her tragic death is thus described by Sir Robert Gordon:—“This Countess of Sutherland (the Lord of the Isles’ daughter) being upon the ferrie of Unes, as shoe wes passing the same perished by storme of wether. Shoe came into the shore with some lyff in her, efter the boat was overwhelmed; bot a fugitive (called John Dairg) dispatched her; for the which inhumayn fact he wes afterward apprehended and executed.”<sup>44</sup>

The next bishop of whom anything is recorded is William Mudy. He was bishop in 1455 A.D., when, for defence of his churches and lands, he gave to his brother, Gilbert, and his heirs the custody of his castles at Scrabster and Skelbo with the adjoining lands.<sup>45</sup> In 1456 Alexander of Dunbeath in his will ordered thirty trentals to be said for his soul, four of them at Dornoch, and bequeathed to the Bishop of Caithness for the repair of St. Gilbert’s Church all the

fees due to him by the bishop since his consecration to office, except £40; and £20 to the same to sing for his soul and to confirm his testament.<sup>46</sup>

Some light is thrown upon the turbulent condition of the country in the fifteenth century by a petition which the Bishop and Chapter of Caithness had sent in to the Pope. In it they stated that "in the wild coast and mountainous parts of Scotland (in which parts is situate the said church wherein are preserved the relics of St. Gilbert, bishop and confessor, the founder of the said church and its college, and of other saints) lawlessness and ambushes by savages are prevalent, so much so that on account of the frequency of their ferocity and depredations, not only are the prelates and clergy of the said church driven away and prevented from residing therein, but also the inhabitants of those parts are plundered and sometimes burned with their wives and little ones and are put to death with the sword: and that therefore Honorius IV, at the personal instance of the said founder, willed that all the land of the said church should, under very grave pains, enjoy a special immunity. The Pope hereby at the petition of John Kennocheson precentor of the said church makes statute and ordinance that no one shall within the bounds of three Italian or Scots miles round about the said church to be marked by the above bishop on every side with crosses, commit arson, rob, mutilate, slay or steal, or carry off any goods, which come for refuge within the said bounds and belong to the said church and its chapter and clergy and other persons

of the said city and diocese, &c., or aid and abet the same under pain of the greater excommunication, interdict, suspension and anathema, &c., which are to be incurred, *ipso facto*, and absolution from which can be given by the apostolic see alone, except in the hour of death, and then by the bishop or his vicar after restitution.”<sup>47</sup> This paints a lurid picture of the dangers and hardships to which the clergy and inhabitants of Dornoch were exposed in a district where rapine and violence were common. And this woeful description of the uncivilised condition of the country is confirmed by the Pope’s statement in his reply to a petition presented by the Prior of Pluscarden regarding a grievance he had against the Bishop of Ross. “Seeing that, as the said petition added, on account of the distance the said prior cannot have competent judges elsewhere than in the diocese of Caithness, and that it is unsafe to go thither on account of the wildness and untractableness of its inhabitants” (“quod silvestres et indomiti homines illam inhabitant”), the Pope made special provision for having the complaint adjusted.

King James III, by a charter of date 14th August, 1464, in response to a petition of William, Bishop of Caithness, grants sanctuary within three miles of the Cathedral Church of Caithness.<sup>48</sup> Of the death of Bishop Mudy there is no record. In a memorandum which appears in the Register of the Great Seal the King gave entry under the great seal to Prosper, Bishop of Caithness, to the temporality of the lands, revenues, and property of the bishopric of Caithness,

his oath of fidelity having formerly been received. Prosper is said to have resigned in favour of John Sinclair, who does not appear to have been consecrated. Thereafter there followed a vacancy of the See extending over a period of nearly twenty-five years, during which the affairs of the bishopric were administered by Adam Gordon, who was Dean and Vicar-General. Sir Robert Gordon says that he was "son of the first Earl of Huntly, and describes him as "a man of singular learning," and testifies that he governed the diocese "with great integritie." He further states that he died at Elgin, June 5th, 1529, and was buried in Elgin Cathedral.

The sources of information for this and the period that follows would have been greatly enriched had the records of the Medieval Church in Dornoch been preserved. Unfortunately, they have long since disappeared, and for such knowledge as can be gleaned regarding the parish in those distant days we must depend for the most part upon Vatican papers, old charters, and Sir Robert Gordon's "Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland." The information thus available centres round the Cathedral and the ecclesiastics who during those centuries guided the affairs of the diocese. Fragmentary though it be, it is of value as affording even a passing glimpse of the parish in those remote days.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE REFORMATION PERIOD

THE period that immediately preceded the Reformation was marked by events of great interest and importance. The Church of Rome had begun to show signs of exhaustion and evidences of corruption and decay. That great medieval organisation which had superseded the old Celtic Church in Scotland had done much to keep the light of Christianity burning amid heathen darkness, to promote civilisation, and to alleviate, in some measure, the evils of feudalism; but it had failed to raise the great masses of the people from the depths of ignorance and rudeness in which they were sunk. It had its ornate and impressive ritual; but its worship was conducted in a language that was unintelligible to the bulk of the laity, and not well known to many of its clergy. It made no effort, even after the invention of printing, to bring the Scriptures within reach of the people; nor did it make any great endeavour to further their education, or to ease their burdens. The clergy were indolent, and neglected their duty; the higher ecclesiastics and ordinary priests had given up preaching; benefices were conferred upon men who were not qualified to occupy them; luxury, avarice, oppression and gross ignorance prevailed among the clergy; and celibacy led to such immorality

as served, along with other abuses, to arouse feelings of indignation that turned the country against them. All this paved the way for the Reformation, which, like a mighty tide, swept over the land. It was the darkness that preceded the dawn of a new and brighter day in Scotland. And yet, even in those degenerate days, there were many good, earnest men among the clergy of the Romish Church who deplored its growing corruption, who did their utmost to arrest its downfall, and who left the Church only when all hope of its revival had to be abandoned. The date of the introduction of the Reformed doctrines into Scotland is uncertain. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century copies of Tyndale's translation of the New Testament were brought into the country by Scottish traders from abroad. These may have first kindled the flame that, fanned by the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart and others, ultimately extinguished Romanism in Scotland. The great leader of the new movement was John Knox, who has been fitly described as "the grandest figure in the entire history of the Scottish Reformation." This great revolution, which created such an upheaval in the Lowlands, made little impression upon the Highlands, where the people, led by the barons, clung tenaciously to the old faith, and only under compulsion ultimately accepted Protestantism.

The dispensations granted by the Pope to allow persons of illegitimate birth to hold benefices in the diocese of Caithness afford evidence of the low standard of morality that prevailed among the clergy



there before the dawn of the Reformation. The protracted vacancy in the bishopric terminated with the appointment of Andrew Stewart, who in an old document is designated "commendator of the monasteries of Kelso and Fern." Andrew is said to have been connected with the royal family. Though the exact date of his election is not known, a charter he granted for a tenement in the town of Wick in 1503 proves that he held office at that date. He was one of the curators appointed in 1509 in connection with the case of Alexander Sutherland, who had instituted a claim to the earldom.<sup>1</sup> In 1511 he was appointed to the high office of King's Treasurer, and is said to have fallen on the disastrous field of Flodden in 1513. According to Sir Robert Gordon, however, he died at Skibo on 15th June, 1518, and was buried in the choir of Dornoch Cathedral.<sup>2</sup> He is described by the historian of Sutherland as "a godlie and wyse man, who did much good in reforming the abuses of the churches within his dyacie during his tyme ther (which wes not long)."<sup>3</sup> Mr R. S. Taylor's "Notes" contain this reference to him:—"Andrew Stewart, Commendator of the Monasteries of Kelso and Fern, who did much good in his time, although short, died at his palace of Skibo, June 17th, 1517, buried in Dornoch."

In a Retour of special service of Sir Thomas Murray as lawful son and heir of Alexander Murray, his father, in regard to certain crofts and tenements situated within the town of Dornoch, dated "*apud Dornoch in curie ejusdem* May 4, 1512," the names

occur of certain members of the Cathedral clergy, viz., David Mundy, Andrew Pantour, Donald Sallour, John Ancrum, Malcolm Ratter, Laurence Smith, Donald Swythin, and Andrew Ferne, who are designated "*capellanis chori ecclesie Cathedralis*," i.e., "Chaplains of the choir of the Cathedral Church."<sup>4</sup> The list is of interest, because it shows that the Cathedral clergy at that period, as at others, were for the most part drawn from districts other than the Highlands. That is not to be wondered at when the state of education in the North in those days is taken into account. This deed also contains the earliest reference to the court-house, in which fifteen burghesses met to hold inquiry regarding the heirship of Sir Thomas to his father's property. That was "held in chief of the Bishop of Cathaness," and in 1515 Bishop Andrew held a court at the market cross, when the aforesaid Sir Thomas Murray, Precentor of the Cathedral, who held that office until 1546, resigned all his hereditary lands in favour of his brother, John Murray. Thereupon the Bishop went to a tenement of those lands lying near the market cross, and gave seisin of them to John, in whose favour they had been resigned.<sup>5</sup> This is the first mention made of the market cross of the burgh, which still occupies its old site, though it evidently has not retained its original form. The date of its erection is unknown.

An old document, dated May, 1518, has been preserved and may be quoted because of the light it sheds upon the somewhat arbitrary method by which,

in certain cases, maidens at that time were disposed of in marriage by their guardians. It is a gift by Adam Gordon, Earl of Sutherland, and his spouse, Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, to John Murray, a burghess of Dornoch, of the marriage of Jonet and Elizabeth Clyne, of date May, 1518, the tenor whereof is as follows :—

Gift by Adam Gordon, Earl of Sutherland,  
and Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland,  
to John Murray of the marriage of Jonet  
and Elizabeth Clyne. May, 1518.

“ Be it kend till all men be thir presentis letteris us, Adam Gordone, erll of Suthirland, and Elesabeht Suthirland, cuntes and heretrice of the samyn, wytht ane consent and assent till haue frelie giffin, and be the tenor of thir our presentis letteris frelie giffis and assingis the marriage of Jonett and Elesabeht Clyne, dochterris and haris to umquhill Wilyeam Clyne of that ilk, till our weilbelowit seruand and freind, Jhonne of Murray, burgen of Dornocht, for his seruice doin and for to be doin to us, and failyeand of us till our haris, wytht full power to the said Jhonne till mary the saidis Jonet and Elesabeht wytht his avin sonnis, Thomas and Hutchon, and failyeand of thame, to dispone apoun the said mariagis of Jonett and Elesabeht att his pleasour, suay that thair be na dispariage : And gif it sall happin, as God forbaid it do, that the saidis Jonet and Elesabeht deceis the tane befoir the tothir, in that cais we gif and transferre the rycht of hir that deceis to the tothir sister that beis

of lyve, and the disposicioun thair of to the said Jhonne inlykwys, and sall gif our preceppis to delyuer the saidis Jonet and Elesabeht to the said Jhonne in keping ay and quhill thay be of heild to be mariit. And gif they will be inobeand till our preceptis and chargis, and will nocht obey our chargis, beand maid and execut in dew forme, in that cais we frelie giftis and assingis all maner of rycht and asseithis that they may tyne att our handis as principaill superior to thame, to the said Johnne and his haris: And this gift and donatry gifin be vs to the said Jhonne tilbe in als greit fors, strynht and effect as ony siclyk is usit wythtin the realme of Scotland, boitt fraud or gyle. In witnes hereof we affixt our selis to thir our presentis letteris of gift and donatry, at Dunrobin, de thent day of the moneht of May, the yere of God ane thousand five hundreht and achtheen yeris, be foir thir witnes, Andro Kynard of that ilk, Alexander Garris, Alexander Bailzie, Rorie Johnsoune, burges of Dornocht, Normant Leslie, and Schir Thomas Poilsone, notar publik, wytht uther diuers and mony, &c."

The second Andrew Stewart, who succeeded his namesake in the bishopric, was a son of the Earl of Atholl. Nothing worthy of note is recorded of him, save that he was supposed to have instigated the murder at Thurso in 1529 of William Sutherland, Laird of Duffus, by the Clan Gunn. Sir Robert Gordon's reference to the crime may be quoted:—  
 "The same yeir of God, Andrew Stuart, bishop of Catteynes, vpon some conceaved displeasure which he had receaved, moved the Clangun to kill the Laird of

Duffus in the toun of Thurso in Catteynes. Vpon this accident the haill dyocie of Catteynes wes in a tumult. The Earle of Southerland did assist the bishop of Catteynes against his adversaries, by reasone of allyance contracted betuixt the houses of Huntly, Southerland, and Atholl. Ther wer great and honorable offers made to the Laird of Duffus his sone, by bishop Andrew, for satisfaction made of his father's slaughter; such as the heretable constablie, with the fue of the lands of Skibo, and the heretable bailliarie of the bishoprick of Catteynes, all which he did refuse, and caused charge the bishop to compeir befor the justice at Edinburgh. Whervpon Andrew retired into Athole, and by the means of the Earles of Huntly, Southerland, and Atholl, together with the king's favor and grace, the mater wes then prorogat, and the day of the bishop's appearance befor the justice wes delayed vntill another tyme." There is evidence to prove that it was the proprietor of Skelbo and not his father who was killed, and that the murder occurred in 1530. The murderers of Sutherland of Duffus found caution on September 3, 1530, to underly the law. They appear to have all been clergy living in the neighbourhood of Thurso. It is worthy of note that the bishop is not named, and that Thomas Stewart, Treasurer of Caithness, is the chief person implicated. It is just possible that popular tradition may have confounded the bishop with him, though it would appear from after events that the bishop too was concerned in the murder. Mackay of Strathnaver's invasion of Sutherland at that time,



which Sir Robert Gordon records, may have been an attempt on his part to avenge the crime for which the bishop was in some measure responsible. Skibo would appear to have been his objective, as, according to Sir Robert, he "encamped in the cuntrey besyd Skibo, at a place called Clashne-Gnawen." Though Clashnagrave can hardly be said to be "besyd Skibo," Mackay's force could easily have made an assault upon the Castle from that point. Sir Robert, however, does not associate the raid with any intention to do injury to the bishop; he interprets it rather as an act of hostility towards the Master of Sutherland, aggravated by the serious illness of that nobleman, and the fact that it was committed "notwithstanding his band of service, given tuiyse befor to Earle Adam." "Yet hearing that the Mr wes seik, he made hast into Southerland; and evin as the Mr wes a dying he invaded the cuntrey, whilst the inhabitants wer beailing the lose of ther lord and master, whose health they preferred to the preservation of ther own lyff and goods. Bot John Macky took seiknes in that journey, and so wes forced to return bake to Strathnaver, wher he died shortlie thereafter, the same yeir of God 1529." Behind the historian's narrative can be traced a suggestion that Mackay's illness and death were regarded by him as of the nature of a judgment upon him for his callousness and perfidy. He had by an Act of Court bound himself to do Alexander, Master of Sutherland, the service he rendered to Adam, Earl of Sutherland, on 6th July, 1522. The bond was drawn up by Mr Robert



MacRaith, Vicar of Kilmaly, in Dornoch Cathedral, and contains the information that “eodem die honestus vir, Johannes MacKy de Strathnavir eo sua propria confessione et spontanea voluntate, sacris Dei evangelis et almi Gilberti reliquiis per ipsum tactis stricte se obligavit, etc.” An obligation taken with such solemnity upon the holy gospels and the relics of St. Gilbert was of so sacred a character that any breach of it might well be regarded by the old chronicler as meriting the Divine judgment. The deed was drawn up by Mr Thomas Gray, Notary Public, who is described as “curiae consistorialis ecclesie cathedralis Cathanensis scribum,” and it closes with the words, “presentibus ibidem, dominus Thoma Murray, cantore Cathanensis, et Edwardo Wormot, presbyteris, Johanne Murray de Cambus-saue et Murchardo Murray, etc.”

There is evidence of the trouble Mackay gave the Master of Sutherland in a band between the Master and John Rory McAneson, of date 29th June, 1529, in which McAneson binds himself to take part with the Master on all occasions against all men, the King excepted; but especially against John Mackay of Strathnaver, his brother Donald, and their friends. He undertakes to defend the Master, his country and others with his utmost power, and to “invaid the said McKy and his partakkiris in all kind of sort . . . . baith in seising and seking of the saidis Jhone McKy, David McKy, thair partakiris, and thair guddis if required.” In return for such service the Master promises to bestow

upon McAneson, as “spous and weddit wyf,” Margaret, daughter of John Murray of Cambusavie. As a dispensation was needed, and a dowry had to be paid to McAneson when the marriage was completed, either party was to choose four friends, two for each party of their “best awisit frendis,” and submit the matter to their arbitration. They must, “if pece and rest be hed in the cuntrethis that is betuix the Mastir and McKy,” abide the award of these four persons to be given at Dornoch as to “quhat and how mekil tochir, gayr, and quhat termis the said Allex-ander sall gif to the said Jhone, and on quhaiis expensis the said dispensacioun sall cum hayme betuix the said personeis.” As soon as peace should be made, in the event of the dispensation not being forthcoming, McAneson had to bind himself under penalties to solemnise his marriage with Margaret Murray “in the face of haly kirk,” as soon as the dispensation should arrive, “the said Margret in the meyne time to pas vith the said Jhone to Strathneuyr or quhar he schapis to dwell.” A penalty of one hundred marks was imposed for any breach of the agreement. The dispensation required for this marriage was one of consanguinity. This was a case of handfasting, which was somewhat common at that time, and was regarded as legal and binding. The Rev. Dr MacQueen makes this reference to the practice in a letter to Pennant:—“It was an ancient practice to take a year’s trial of a wife, and if they were mutually satisfied with one another in that time, the marriage was declared good and lawful at the

expiration of it. But when either of the parties insisted on a separation, and that a child was begotten in the year of probation, it was to be taken care of by the father only, and to be ranked among his lawful children next after his heirs."

In a bond of manrent between the Master of Sutherland and William Sutherland of Duffus, dated 4th September, 1529, the latter binds himself and his heirs to be "leyll and trew," to "ryid, gang, and serue" the Master at all times and in every way possible. He and his heirs, if required personally, or failing them their bailies, were to rise "with all the powar of men, kynnismen, tennentis, and seruandis" at their own charges, and take part with the Master and his heirs everywhere within the diocese of Caithness and Ross, as often as required, under a penalty of £1500 Scots. The closing words of the bond are as follows:—

"And for the obseruing and keping of all and syndry the premissis in forme, forse and effect as said is, the said Vilyam Suthirland of Duffos, byndis me my airis and assignais, in the sickarist forme of obligatioun perpetuallie to the said Allexander, mastir of Suthirland, his airis and successouris, be the faith and trewth in my body, the haly ewangelistis twechit, vnder the pane of fyve hundreth li. to be payit be me, my airis and assignais, brekaris of any punt of the premissis, for the breking of our fayth, to the operation and edification of the cathedrall kirk of Cathnes, and uthir fyve hundreth li. to the kingis grace, and five hundreth li. to the said Allexander,

his airis or successouris, that I or thai happinnis to falze to for the ressaung of me in the landis abone expremit, and for costis, skathis, dampnage and interes sustenit be hyme and thame heirthrow, and that but ony uthir taxation to be hed or maid thair-apon be ony juge spirituall or temporall; and consentis that this principall band be registrat and ingrossat in the Consistorie bukis of Cathnes, and I, for me, my airis and assignais, lardis of Duffos and Skelbo, moneist to keyp the samyne in all puntis vndir the panis afor expremit and vndir the panis of cursing.

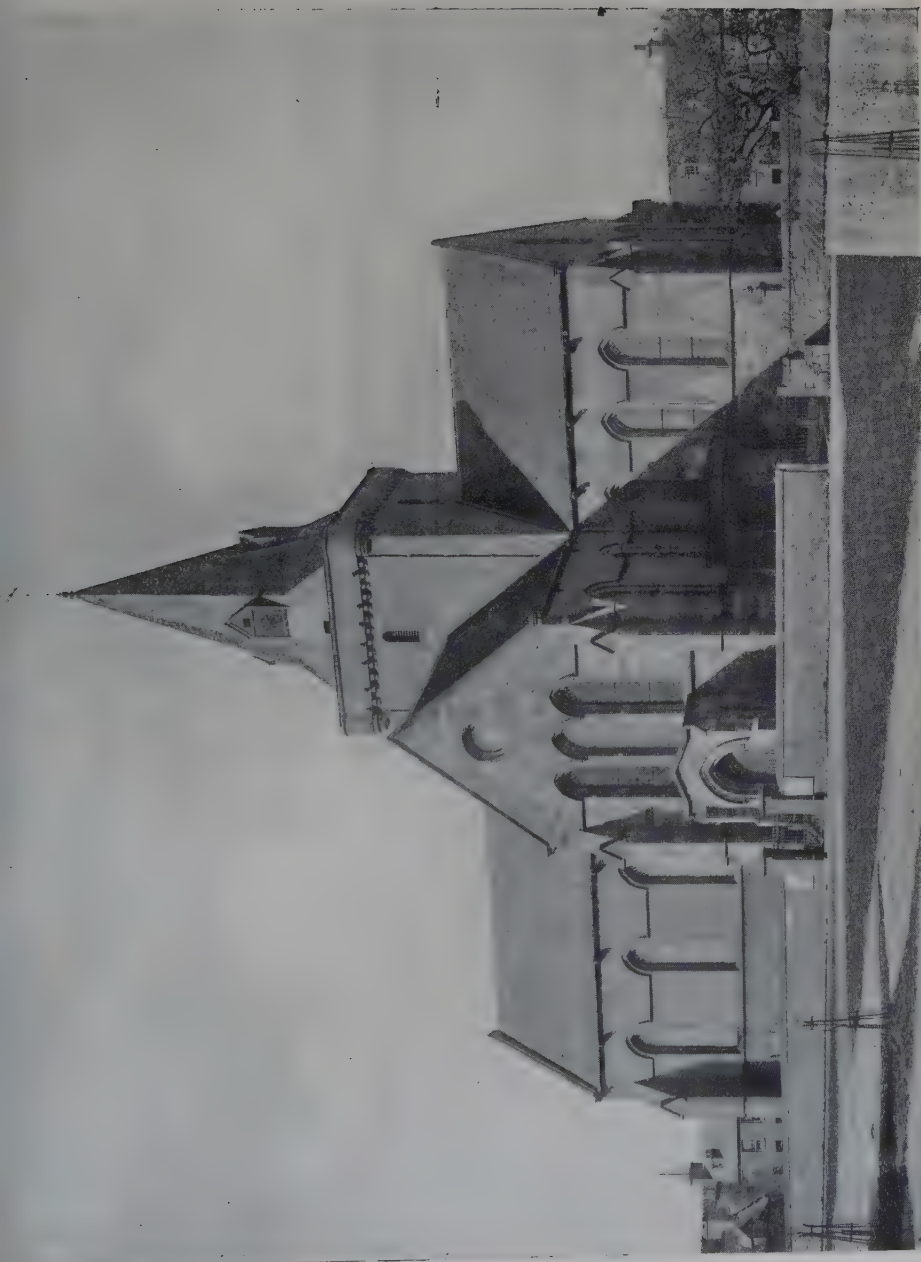
WM. SUYLAND off Duffus, wt. my hand.

Dunrobin, 4th September, 1529."

Sutherland of Duffus had acquired Skelbo by purchase, c. 1528, from the Kinnairds, who about 1440 had come into hereditary possession of it by the marriage of Thomas Kinnaird to the daughter and heiress of Walter Moray of Cubin and Skelbo.

Of special interest in this bond of manrent is the provision made for the payment of a portion of the penalty imposed for any breach of the agreement towards "the operation and edification of the cathedrall kirk of Cathnes." As the fabric was at that time nearly three hundred years old, and probably in need of repair, this reference does not necessarily suggest that any disaster had overtaken it, though in those turbulent days that was possible.

To this period belongs an interesting charter by which Adam Gordon, Earl of Sutherland, and Elizabeth, his spouse, Countess and heretrix thereof, grant to William Sutherland, Lord of Duffus, the lands and







lordship of Proncy, vacant by reason of the death of Hugh Sutherland without heirs male. The grant was made by the Earl and Countess "lest the lands subject to their lordship should pass to strangers and persons without title." In return for the grant Sutherland of Duffus was to "render the service due and wont and ward, relief and marriage, when these happened, and also counsel, help and assistance to the Earl in his causes and quarrels." The charter was dated at Elgin, 26th March, 1525, and was signed by the Earl and Countess, each "with my hand at the pen." Their apparent inability to write even their own names reveals the deplorable lack of education at that period even among those of high rank in the Highlands. They were apt to hold learning in contempt.

It appears to have been a common practice at this time to have deeds for the disposal of lands in the parish drawn up at centres in the South. A Precept of Sasine by Adam Gordon, Earl of Sutherland, for infesting John Kynnard, son and heir of the deceased Andrew Kynnard of that ilk, with the lands of Skelbo was drawn up and witnessed at Legetis Town (Leith) on 13th July, 1525. The grant included Skelbo Castle and manor place thereof, Easter Skelbo with the brewhouse and crofts thereof, Davochdow, Auchandro, Paitmayne, Balnobraid, Cammasseffe, etc. The said John Kynnard by a contract between him and William Sutherland of Duffus, dated at Aberdeen, 1st April, 1529, binds himself to infest heritably by charter and sasine the said William and his heirs in the lands of Skelbo, with the Castle and salmon fish-

ing thereof, to be held of the Earl of Sutherland as overlord, for service used and wont and for payment of 2300 merks Scots in the town of Dundee at May and the “feist of Lammas callit ad vincula Sancti Petri.” On 15th September of that year John Murray of Camplussy, as bailie in that part for John Kynard, gave seisin of Skelbo to Sutherland, receiving a black ox with grey horns as evidence of the seisin of the lands and castle of Skelbo, and a “brandit” ox as evidence of the seisin of Innerschyn, the water, lyne, net, fishing boat and cable.”

By a Precept of Clare Constat given at Darnaway on November 3, 1554, “John, Earl of Sutherland, as superior, with consent of Helen Stewart, Countess of Sutherland, his spouse, infetted Alexander Sutherland of Duffus, as heir of the deceased William Sutherland of Duffus, his grandfather, “who died at the faith and peace of King James the Fifth,” in all and sundry the lands and fortalice or castle of Skelbo, etc., the said Alexander being of lawful age by reason of the overlord’s dispensation with his minority. Sasine of the fishings to be given by delivery of a net and boat, as use is in like cases.” Notwithstanding this concession, Alexander Sutherland, on 20th July, 1559, entered into an agreement with the Earl of Caithness, the hereditary foe of the House of Sutherland, whereby his oldest son, Alexander, then a boy of five years of age, failing whom his next son, should marry Elizabeth Sinclair, the Earl’s daughter, or any other of his daughters the Earl should elect. In pursuance of this arrangement Alexander, Master of

Duffus, married Elizabeth at Lammas, 1568; but as he died without issue before his father, his younger brother was married to Margaret, the Earl's youngest daughter. This matrimonial alliance between Duffus and the Earl of Caithness was apparently designed as a pact between their families against the Earl of Sutherland. So unfriendly an act on the part of Duffus may have been due, to some extent, to jealousy of the Gordon accession to the Earldom of Sutherland, and sympathy with the Sutherland claimants to it. That may explain the hostile attitude the Lairds of Skelbo for two generations adopted towards the Earls of Sutherland and their co-operation with the Earl of Caithness in the repeated attacks he afterwards made upon the territory of their neighbour and overlord. Had they been loyal to him, Dornoch might have been saved the disaster that a few years later overtook it. In June, 1563, Alexander Sutherland of Duffus received from Queen Mary a gift of the lands he had formerly held of the deposed Earl of Sutherland. This gave him an independence which no doubt confirmed him in his disloyalty to the Earl and in his adherence to his friend, the Earl of Caithness. And yet, that his loyalty to that nobleman did not keep him from rallying to the support of his kinsmen in Caithness, when they needed his help, is evident from a complaint made by the Earl of Caithness to the Privy Council in 1566 that William Sutherland of Evelix, Nicholas Sutherland, brother of Duffus, John Sutherland in Torboll and others, at the instigation of Duffus, surprised and captured the Castle of Berrie-

dale on the night of December 23rd, 1565, after killing and wounding some of its defenders, who held it for the Earl after it had been retaken from a band of Caithness Sutherlands who had first captured it. The Lords ordered Alexander Sutherland of Duffus to present the culprits before the Justice within the Tolbooth of Edinburgh “ undir the pane of rebelloun and putting of him to the horne.”

In 1504 Andrew, Bishop of Cathanes, had granted to John Murray in heritage the lands of Auchinecloich, bounded by Cragge on the south, Pronsenain on the west, the common pasture on the north, and Pitgrode on the east, also a tenement and garden in the burgh of which the donation belonged to the bishop *pleno jure*, the grantee paying fourpence yearly for each rood of the tenement. In 1535 John Murray resigned the burgh lands of Achloich in the hands of Alexander Murray, bailie of Dornoch, in favour of his friend and kinsman, Walter Murray, reserving the liferent to himself. In 1537 Master Alexander Sutherland, Dean of Cathanes, resigned to Bishop Andrew all his rights to the lands of Achloich in favour of Walter Murray, burgess of Dornoch. The names of the “burgesses and neighbours” of the burgh of Dornoch who witnessed this resignation are Walter Lesly, Gorre Neilson, Alexander Gar, Farchard MacTalyour, and John McAne McAlexander.

On the mandate of John Ostelar in 1524 sasine was granted to Say Lesly of a tenement situated between the king's common road and the burn in Dornoch. The witnesses to the deed were Rodric

McAne Duf, William McAyne Oyr, John Murray, and Farchard McTalyour, burgesses and neighbours of Dornoch, as also John Awloch, who is designated as "mair."

On 7th December, 1536, within the Chancellor's manse in Dornoch, Hugh Kanide of Garwenmanis and his wife, Jonet Steward, *viue vocis oraculo* granted a discharge for the "mails, fermes and grassums of the towns of Petfwr, Knockartoll, Cam-busaffe, Balbrade and the half of Coul," and of all the burdens on those lands until the feast of Pentecost that immediately followed that date. The Chancellor was the ecclesiastical dignitary who had the qualifications necessary for the drawing up of such a deed. That office had been held by Sir William Fudes in 1524, as we gather from a charter witnessed by him that year. He must have died or been translated soon after, as in that same year Sir John Dingwall succeeded him, having been promoted from the office of Archdeacon to the Chancellery of Caithness. Sir Thomas Murray was precentor of the Cathedral for over thirty years (1515-1546). In 1515 he resigned certain lands in Dornoch, and that same year he witnessed a charter of Andrew Kynnard. During a period of about twenty years the position of Treasurer was held by Master Thomas Stewart, who in 1529 took such a prominent part in the murder at Thurso of the Laird of Duffus. Sir John Dingwall, who was Archdeacon in 1520, held the same office in Moray, and was also Rector of Strabrok in Linlithgow. He was succeeded by

William Gordone, who witnesses a charter in 1529. Bishop Andrew Stewart, under whom they served, died in 1542 "illegitimate and intestate."

He was succeeded by his nephew, Robert Stewart, the second son of John, third Earl of Lennox. Though he was educated for the priesthood he apparently never took orders. He was Provost of the Collegiate Church of Dumbarton, and in 1542 was elected Bishop of Caithness. In a charter of 1544 he is styled "bishop elect and confirmed." Another charter granted that same year by Bishop Robert is witnessed by his brother, Matthew, Earl of Lennox, Lord Darnele, who afterwards became Regent in succession to the Earl of Arran, and was shot in Stirling after a brief tenure of that high office. For participation in his brother's rebellion Bishop Robert forfeited his bishopric, which was provisionally bestowed upon Alexander Gordon, a brother of the Earl of Huntly. The Bishop took refuge in England, and during his absence the Earl of Caithness and Mackay of Farr took possession of the lands and revenues of the bishopric in his name, and occupied the castles of Skibo and Scrabster. Sir Robert Gordon thus describes what happened in the neighbourhood of Skibo at that time:—

"Whilst bishop Robert Stuart was banished into England, Alexander Gordoun (as yow have heard) wes designed to be bishop of Catteynes, and to possesse the same. In the meantyme, the Earle of Catteynes and Macky, perceaveing the civil dissention of the state, and knowing that this bishoprick stood in



controversie, they did possesse themselves with the bishop's lands and rents, vnder pretence of bishop Robert his right, whom they weill knew to be so farr from them, as that he wold not seik ane accompt of the profits therof. And thervpon Macky came into Southerland with a company of men out of Strathnaver, took the castell of Skibo, fortfeid the same, and left Neill-Mack-William (one of Sleght-Ean-Aberigh) to keip it. George Earle of Catteynes took, in lyke maner, the castell of Strabbister (ane other house of the bishopes) and possessed the same. So, when Robert bishop of Catteynes wes restored, they wold not render vnto him the possession of his owne landes and houses, although befor they had pretended to possesse and keip the same in his behalf; which the Earles of Huntlie and Southerland vnderstanding at Edinburgh (wher they wer for the tyme), they directed Captane James Cullen with all dilligence befor them into Southerland, to sie how maters went; at whose aryvall the cuntriemen wer encouraged, and did assemble at Dornogh, with a resolution to beseidge the castle of Skibo. The Strathnaver men hearing of ther approach, conveyed themselves secretlie out of the castle, and retired with all dilligence into Strathnaver, not without great danger in ther flight, by reasone that some of the inhabitants of Southerland pursued them eagerlie, and killed some of ther companie befor they culd reatch ther owne cuntrie. So presentlie Captane Cullen did possesse himself with the castle of Skibo, in behalf of the bishop."

As a sequel to this incident the Protocol Book of David Seaton among the records of Aberdeen states

that on 23rd April, 1545, John Gray of Kilmaly appeared before John, Earl of Sutherland; Thomas Murray, Precentor of Caithness; Thomas Stewart, Treasurer; Duncan Chalmer, Chancellor of Ross, and Paul Freser, Pensionary of the deanery of Ross, in the chapter-house of Dornoch Cathedral, and "swore on the relics of Saint Gilbert that he was innocent of the coming of the servants and accomplices of Donald McKy of Far within the bounds of the earldom of Sutherland, and of the depredation and slaughter committed by them therein." At the same time John Gray and John Matheson, Chancellor of Caithness, "gave their great oath on the same relics to be faithful to the Earl of Sutherland."

Queen Mary in 1545 granted to Sir James Dempster "the fermes and dues of the lands and baronies of the bishopric of Caithness which were in the Queen's hands by reason of the escheat of Robert bishop elect for passing to England in time of war without the Queen's licence." That same year Bishop Robert returned from England to induce the Constable of Dumbarton Castle to yield it to the King of England; but an offer of the restoration of his bishopric made him concert with the Constable for the surrender of the Castle to the Regent Arran. In 1548, along with the Chancellor of Caithness and others, he had to find surety to appear before the civil court to answer for taking and detaining from Master Alexander Gordon, postulate of Caithness, the "house and place of Scrabister and for seizing the fruits of the Bishopric." The Earl of Caithness and

Mackay of Far, who had appropriated the revenues of the bishopric, refused to give them up; they were compelled to do so by the Earls of Huntly and Sutherland, "by which means," as Sir Robert Gordon records, "the dyocie of Catheyneß was for some years in peace and quietnes." "Thus," adds the historian, "wes bishop Robert Stuart repossessed in his owne bishoprick."<sup>20</sup> Its condition at that time may be inferred from a "Series of Articles" preferred by the Bishop against the Earl of Caithness in 1549 in which he charges him with various acts of violence and oppression, pollution of the kirk and sanctuary, and robbery of church furnishings. Earl George was notorious for his deeds of violence and oppression, for which in 1556 the Queen granted him remission.

At a meeting of the Secret Council in April, 1545, Bishop Robert was deprived of the fruits of his bishopric; at a later meeting his treason was condoned. He had, however, to appear before a tribunal appointed by the Pope to try his case at St. Andrews. His remission was "to indure quhill the end of the play and ane moneth thareftir." At a meeting of Parliament in September of the same year he was charged with treason, but Cardinal Beaton having protested that a civil court had no jurisdiction over a bishop no further action was taken. In the same month Queen Mary granted to Master Alexander Gordon, postulate of Caithness, all the goods and arrears of the pension of the bishopric which belonged to the late Bishop Andrew Stewart. In 1547 the

Queen granted a letter of protection to the postulate, his men, tenants and servants of the temporality of the bishopric. On Bishop Robert's restoration to his bishopric Alexander Gordon was given a yearly pension of 500 marks.

Bishop Robert, finding that in the disturbed condition of his diocese he needed support and protection, made an agreement with the Earl of Sutherland by which the Earl, on account of local disorders and commotions, undertook to protect the persons and property of the Bishop and his Chapter, aid them in collecting the rents, teinds, and duties, and defend them if they were molested. For such service the Earl was to get £100 Scots annually, along with the assistance of the Bishop and his Chapter in all his lawful concerns, so far as lay in their power. The deed is a long and interesting one, and ends with the words, "and is content that this presentes be registrat in consistoribus bukis of Dornoch." Both parties agree that "if necessary these presents may be reformed by the counsel of cunning men for their further security."<sup>21</sup> The witnesses included John Jaksoun, Chancellor, and Angus MacRay, Chantor. The contract, the date of which is torn away, was signed and sealed at Dornoch. The "local disorders and contentions" arose from a keen struggle between the lairds of the district for possession of the Church lands. The great wealth of the Church excited the rapacity of the barons all over the country, and the espousal of the reformed faith by many of them was dictated by selfish motives. Dilapidations of Church

property began many years before the consummation of the Reformation in 1560. Bishops, deans, and other dignitaries of the Church, realizing the danger in which she stood and foreseeing her downfall, prepared for it to their own advantage by disposing of the property attached to their offices on favourable terms to their relatives and friends. After the Reformation had become an accomplished fact a great spoliation of the property of the Church took place.

The Bishopric of Caithness, according to the *Antiqua Taxatio*, was variously estimated at £386 13s 4d and £286 14s 10½d. In the *Libellus Taxationum* it is valued at 1000 marks. The total value of the bishopric at the Reformation is stated in the *Book of Assumptions* to have been £1283 18s 9d.

Bishop Robert took full advantage of the situation, as events proved. On 14th September, 1560, by a charter given at Dornoch Cathedral to William Innes "for a sum of money spent upon the repair of the Cathedral Church of Caithness and for the defence of the said bishop, canons, and other ecclesiastical persons of his diocese and for other favours at length, for the long service rendered to him in the private and public affairs of his Church, both within Scotland and in different other kingdoms," he grants him certain lands in Caithness. The charter is witnessed by John Gray of Swordale, Alexander Lowell, and James Dempster, Notary.<sup>22</sup> Its reference to a sum of money expended upon the repair of the Cathedral is of great interest. The confirmation of the charter by the King is recorded in the Register of the Great Seal.

For his own further protection and the strengthening of his position, Bishop Robert arranged a marriage in August, 1548, between his only sister, Lady Eleanor Stewart, and the Earl of Sutherland. Five years later, in view of the impending changes in the polity of the Church in Scotland, the Bishop and his Chapter took the precaution of appointing the Earl of Sutherland to the office of hereditary bailie of all the lands, bounds and possessions of the diocese, and in 1557 they granted a great part of these Church lands in feufarm to the Earl, his Countess and their heirs. The grant included the lands and Castle of Skibo, Cyderhall, Scrabster Castle and lands, the city and palace of Dornoch. "Further because the grantees castle of Scrabister and palace of Dornoch were situated in an Irish (Hibernica) country among fierce and untamed Scots, so that neither he nor his predecessors had been able to enjoy them without very great expenses, he, with consent of his dean and chapter, appointed the Earl and Countess and their said heirs hereditary constables of the castle of Scrabister and palace of Dornoch for ever, assigning for their expenses in keeping and maintenance thereof the ninepenny halfpenny lands of Scrabister and crofts and acres of Dornoch extending to £80 yearly." The deed is dated 26th March, 1557, and was drawn up at Dornoch.<sup>23</sup> The Bishop made subsequent grants to the Earl of a similar nature in 1559 and 1560. His description of the inhabitants of his diocese as "fierce and untamed Scots," if accurate, while not complimentary to the people, was surely a



reflection upon the civilizing influence of the Church that had laboured among them for centuries. The seal of the Chapter is attached to the deed of 1559, and it bears the inscription, "S. CAPITVLI ECCLESIE SANCTE DEI GENITRICIS MARIE CATANENSIS." The charter of 1560 is dated St. Andrews, 4th February, 1560, and for certain sums of money paid by the Earl, and for his defence of the canons and others "in hoc periculoso tempore et in futuro," renews the grants of 1557 and 1559, with the addition, among other properties, of Skibo Castle and its pendicles.<sup>24</sup> The Bishop's anxiety to secure the protection of the Earl for his clergy "in this perilous time and for the future" indicates that his espousal of Protestantism was due not so much to conviction as to regard for his own advantage. Anxiety to retain the emoluments of his office made him avowedly an adherent of the Reformed Church, whose ascendancy was now assured.

The Reformation had made such progress in Scotland that by 1558 the Reformers had organized themselves into a congregation, and their titled leaders were known as "Lords of the Congregation." The Earl of Sutherland attended the convention of states in Edinburgh in 1558 and was elected one of the lords of the articles. To this meeting the Reformers presented their demands for the redress of their grievances, and the Queen-Regent promised them forbearance and protection. This promise she violated by taking stern measures for the repression of the reformed preachers and their teaching, putting

them "to the horn," which virtually proclaimed them rebels. This extreme measure led to civil war between the Lords of the Congregation and the Regent, who brought a strong body of mercenaries from France to subdue the Reformers. They in turn asked for and obtained assistance from England. The Earl of Sutherland took part in a fight at Kinghorn with the French soldiers of the Regent, and was severely wounded in the left arm by a shot from a hagbut. He was conveyed to Cupar, which was the headquarters of the Leaders of the Congregation, and after a time he returned to Dunrobin. His wound prevented his participation in public affairs for some considerable time. In June, 1560, the Queen-Regent died, and soon thereafter the Protestant Party obtained the ascendancy.

In December of 1561 the Earl of Sutherland attended, along with the Bishop of Caithness, a convention of states held in Edinburgh. A meeting of the General Assembly of the Reformed Church had also been convened to discuss, among other things, the question of the Church revenues, in which both the Bishop and the Earl had a personal interest. That same year Mary Queen of Scots had returned from France and set herself to restore Romanism in Scotland. She had the support of the Earl of Sutherland, until his implication in the Earl of Huntly's treason was discovered through letters found on the body of that nobleman, who was slain in the fight at Corrichie in Aberdeenshire. The Earl of Sutherland was, accordingly, arraigned before Parliament on 28th

May, 1563, for "art, part, and assistance" in Huntly's treason, when he was condemned to death, "his dignity, name and memory to be extinct and deleted, and all his lands, offices and goods to be confiscated." The Earl escaped to Flanders, where he spent the next two years in exile and such poverty that he had to depend for his maintenance upon money borrowed "in his great neid" from his countrymen there. Queen Mary, who was kindly disposed to his Countess, "knewand her to be ane honorabil personage, discendit of gude and nobill lynnage," granted her the profits and duties of all the lands pertaining to her in liferent, including those disposed to her by the Earl of Sutherland and those feufarmed to them by the bishop, dean, and chantor of Caithness, with the escheat of all the Earl's goods, moveable and immoveable. It was a kindly act on the part of her Majesty, which must have helped to revive the Earl's loyalty to her cause. On his way home from Flanders to espouse the cause of the Queen he was captured and brought to Berwick, where he was laid up with a severe ague. He was afterwards released through the influence of various friends. Soon thereafter his forfeiture was declared null by Act of Parliament, in virtue of which he was "restored to all his lands and honours and goods."<sup>25</sup>

Bishop Robert had evidently taken the precaution of securing the Church lands he had granted to Earl John to his son, Alexander Gordon, by a charter of date 6th March, 1563, confirmation of which was afterwards granted in a charter by the King and

Queen, the original of which is preserved in the Register House, Edinburgh. The narrative bears that these lands had been forfeited by John, late Earl of Sutherland, for treason and *lese majesty*, and that Queen Mary, on the ground that the Earl's son was an infant and had not partaken in his father's crime, had presented him to the Bishop as feufarmer of those lands. Queen Mary had granted to her brother, Robert Stewart, the lands and baronies of the earldom of Sutherland, which he resigned in 1566, when they were restored to Earl John by a precept of the King and Queen. In the following year the Earl and his Countess met their death by poisoning in Helmsdale Castle at the hands of Isobel Sinclair, wife of the Earl's uncle; they were buried in Dornoch Cathedral in July, 1567. The Earl's son, Alexander, who nearly shared his father's fate, was taken to Skibo Castle for safety. The Castle was at that time under the charge of John Gray of Swordell, its hereditary constable, and was apparently in a ruinous condition. This information is conveyed in a letter incorporated in a charter by which Bishop Robert anew grants the keeping of the Castle to John Gray, Elizabeth Barclay, his spouse, the survivors of them, and their heirs and assignees. The letter is of sufficient interest to merit quotation at length. "Be it kend . . . ws Robert bischoip of Cathnes, be advise, consent and assent of oure chaptour, to have dew consideration and knowledge be oure confirmation geving to oure servitoure Johnne Gray of Swardell and Eliz Barclay his spouis, the langest lewar of thame twa, and thair airis and

assignayis, apone the heretable having, posseding and keiping of our castell and fortalice of Skebo and constabularye thair of, obtenit be the said Johnne heretablie and immediatlie fra thame that heretabill jure and titil thairto mediatlie halden of ws . . . . for the ressavng of us thairin uponn oure awin expensis in all thingis lyk as is contenit in chartouris in the quhilkin evidentis we . . . are bundin and oblist to repair and uphald oure said fortalice and castell in wallis and thek sufficientlie . . . and now we, haifand dew consideratioun and knowledge that oure said fortalice. . . . is nocht only rewynois in wallis, thek, rowis, durris, windois, tymmerwerk and irnewark, bot als is neir decait, faillit and destitute of plenishing, to the hurt of ws. . . . in oure resorting and dewling thairin and greit hurt of the west pairt of Sutherland in trobillis tyme bend ane barboure and sowage rowme circumdat and enwerronit with clannis and brokin men. . . and becaus we may nocht help to bige, fortifie nor repair the samen sodenlie throch greit exactiones yeirlye payit and appeiring to be payit wynderous far by the use and custame usit in oure predicessouris dayis, yit that sumthing may be done yeirlye in the amendament and helping of oure said fortalice and for uphalding of the samyn in all tymes cuming to the publict weill of this realme in danting of lymmeris, swirtie of passingeris and ressavng of ws, we be the avyse . . . . assignis for now and ever to the said Joh Gray, Eliz Barclay his spouis, the langest levar of thame two, thair airis and assignais, constabillis of the said hous . . . .

the malis and dewties of the landis of Swerdell, Mygdall, Creich and fisching of the Bonach, maill and dewteis of the landis now callit Cuthill . . . and 20s maill of Auchwaiche . . . quhilkis landis lyis within the schirefdome of Invernes and baronie of Skebo, and in the handis of the said Joh now be ressoun of fewdeferm except in Auchwaiche quhilk he hes in tak and assedatioun . . . quhilkis maill we quitclames and dischargeis and under the paneis never to be hard in jugement to and quhill thankfullie be content and payit the sowme of 10000 pundis. . . for costis, skaithis, and damage . . . in kais (as God forbeid) that we wald allege the saidis quitclames and dischargeis nocht to be sufficient for now and ever for the said yeirly assignatioun and help quhilk he has assignit as said is for repairing, bwilding and uphalding of oure said hous : . . . Mairattour we ordenis James Fraser, Alex. Lovell, bailzeis, to gif sesing be ane pennye of Scottis money. In witnes hair of . . . At our place of Skebo, 15 Feb. 1565. Befoir thir witnes, Arch Crawford of Sydra, Alex Lovell, portioner of Cragye, Schir Wil Gray notar publict.'<sup>26</sup>

This interesting letter shows that in the middle of the sixteenth century Skibo Castle was a thatched house in a sad state of disrepair, though it must have been fit for habitation, as the Bishop dates his letter from it. It also proves that, five years after the Reformation had been consummated in Scotland, Bishop Robert deemed it worth his while to expend money upon the repair of the house that was to be his residence when he visited the district, which he



evidently hoped to do for many years to come. It is hardly likely that his visits to his diocese were frequent after he became Commendator of the Priory of St. Andrews and took up his residence there. When he did visit Dornoch he continued to make Skibo Castle his residence. The charter in which the Bishop's letter was incorporated is recorded in the Register of the Great Seal, and is in these terms :—

“The King confirmed the charter of Bishop Robert, Commendator of the Priory of St. Andrews, by which because the persons written below were hereditary constables of his castle or palace of Skebo and obtained an annual stipend of 15 lib. 3 sol. 4 den., which hardly sufficed for the support of one inferior servant required for the custody of the said castle, with the consent of the chapter of Caithness granted to John Gray of Swordale and Elizabeth Barclay his wife and the survivor of either in conjunct feu, and their successors as constables of the said castle for increase of the said stipend, the dues and sums raised in name of feufarm by Alexander, Earl of Sutherland, of his lands of Sythera, Ullesty, Ardelies, Ferrytoun with the dues of the same passage, Ovir Skebo, Davochfyn, mill of Skebo, amounting in all to 43 lib. 12 sol. 1 den., and this for the maintenance of servants, payment of their wages, as a hospes to be made for the said bishop by the said John as it had been made before at the expense of the said bishop, and if the said dues should be assumed for part of the third payment of the said bishopric, the said bishop grants to the said John in compensation for them the garbal

tithes of Kilmalymor and Drummue in the parish of Kilmaly, amounting yearly to 3 chalders 8 bolls of barley. . . . with sasine to Alex. Lowell of Pitgrudy. Apud Sancti Andreae, 21 July, 1576."<sup>27</sup> Thus did the Bishop make provision for his entertainment and comfort at the mansion that had always been the country residence of the bishops, and, after the transference of Dornoch Castle to the Earls of Sutherland, was the only suitable place available in the neighbourhood for his accommodation.

The Earl of Athole had disposed of the wardship of the young Earl to the Earl of Caithness, a man without any scruple, and with a great ambition to extend his authority in the North. He immediately took possession of Earl Alexander at Skibo Castle, which the constable, instructed by the bishop, surrendered to him. For the bishop thus to aid and abet the nefarious schemes of a nobleman against whom, but a few years previously, he had made charges of cruelty and oppression seems an extraordinary proceeding. The wily ecclesiastic for his own ends appears at this time to have been eager to conciliate the Earl, whose good services he recognizes in a charter he granted about that time, the tenor of which is as follows:—"Be it kend. . . . ws Robert be the mercie of God bischop of Caithnes and commendator of the priorie of Sainctandrous with expres consent and assent of the dene and chaptour of the cathedral kirk of Cathnes understand that Geo erll of Cathenes hes not onlie be his gret laubowris and travellis but als be exponing and waring furth of divers sowmes of

money . . . . defendit ws in the uptaking of our  
haill fruitis . . . and in bruiking of the privilegis  
and fredomes pertaning to the samen, without quhais  
assistance, help and support we had bene alliutterlie  
debarrit and put fra our benefices forsaidis . . . .  
thairfoir to have gevin '' to the Earl of Caithness a  
yearly pension and certain lands as security.<sup>23</sup> It is  
quite evident that the Bishop's consuming anxiety  
was for payment of the revenues of the bishopric, and  
that whoever helped to secure him that earned his  
gratitude and favour. No doubt the growing power  
of the Earl of Caithness convinced the Bishop that it  
was to his interest to adopt a more conciliatory atti-  
tude towards him. The tragic death of the late Earl  
of Sutherland and the wardship of his youthful suc-  
cessor had given the Earl of Caithness a position of  
supremacy in the diocese which created a condition  
of anarchy and confusion in Sutherland. Taking  
advantage of the distracted state of the country,  
Mackay of Strathnaver made a raid upon it, laid waste  
the barony of Skibo, and thereafter attacked and  
burned the town of Dornoch. In Pitcairn's *Criminal  
Trials* the date of this disastrous foray is given as  
June, 1566. Sir Robert Gordon, however, assigns  
it to the following year in his record of the event,  
which runs thus :—" Y Macky of Far, having entered  
in alliance with the Earle of Catheynes, joyned with  
him against the Earle of Southerland, and as many  
men doe often mak use of the contention of ther  
neighbours, so Macky taking occasion upon the con-  
fusion of these troublesome tymes to gain something

he invaded the cuntrie of Southerland after the death of Earle John, wasted the barony of Skibo, came to the town of Dornogh, and (upon some private quarrell betuein himselff and the Morrayes) being assisted by the Laird of Duffus and his freinds, he burnt the said toun, the yeir of God 1567, which wes then cheiffie inhabited by the Morrayes.''<sup>29</sup> One of the Macleods of Assynt, Neil Angusson, was evidently associated with Mackay in this burning of Dornoch, as, some years later, when arraigned before the Lords of Secret Council at Holyrood for this and other crimes, he pleaded that Mackay had compelled him to accompany him to Dornoch, and that the burning of that town was justified by the rules of warfare. No information is available regarding the extent of the damage done to the town by this conflagration; the probability is that the chief buildings escaped, and that the havoc wrought by fire, though a calamity, was soon repaired. The ordinary houses of those days were of a primitive character and easily constructed.

Meantime the young Earl was kept a prisoner at Dunrobin by his guardian, which was more than his friends could endure. They formed a plot for his liberation, and Alexander Gordon of Sidera, disguised as a pedlar, obtained access to the castle and managed to acquaint the Earl with their plans. As he was taking his morning walk in the Golspie Glen, attended by a bodyguard of Caithness men, the young Earl was rescued, conveyed with all haste to the Meikle Ferry, which was crossed at some risk owing to a sudden storm, and conveyed to Strathbogie, where he was

put under the care of the Earl of Huntly. There he remained in safety until, on the attainment of his majority in 1573, he made a legal claim for possession of his estates, and after his return set himself to restore order in the country.

During his absence disaster again overtook the town of Dornoch at the hands of its hostile neighbours from the north country. The historian of Sutherland must be allowed to tell the story of a calamity which made St. Gilbert's little city a scene of ruin and desolation. He begins by narrating the skirmish of Torranroy, which was the spark that kindled the flame by which Dornoch was devastated. This was a sharp fight between the burghers and Lord Duffus, who made a descent upon the town from Skelbo, but was routed and pursued "even to the gates of Skelbo." Earl George having heard of this defeat of his ally, "sent the Master of Caithness and a company of his followers who were joined by Y Mackay's men, together with the most part of the inhabitants of Catteynes and Southerland, saving some few that remained constant to Earl Alexander, and assisted the Gordons and the Morrayes. When the Mr. of Catteynes and Y Macky approached the toun of Dornogh, they beseidged the same and castle therof, which wes possessed by the Morrayes and ther partakers, who still skirmished against them and ther men, chusing rather to stick to it manfullie, then cowardlie to yeild at the verie first. The Master of Catteynes brunt the cathedrall church and the toun, in the night sease, which the inhabitants culd no longer defend, yit after the toun wes

lost, and the cathedrall church brunt except the steiple, they held the castle and the steiple of the church for the space of a weik, the Catteynes continually assaulting them, bot in vain, without successe. In the end, newtrall and indifferent men did travell and daill betuein them, to whose mediation the Morayes surrendered the castle and the steiple of the church, the yeir of God 1570, the respect of ther loyaltie yeilding to present necessitie.''<sup>30</sup> In an old MS. of the seventeenth century, which is preserved in the Register House, Edinburgh, an account—apparently based upon that of Sir Robert Gordon—is given of the burning of the Cathedral, in which it is stated that the defenders held the Castle “for the space of a month.” That the defence of the Castle continued for three weeks after the tower of the Cathedral had been evacuated is unlikely, and the period given in Sir Robert’s narrative is doubtless the correct one. Three hostages given by the Murrays as a guarantee that they would implement the terms of surrender were afterwards treacherously put to death at the instance of the Earl of Caithness, who disowned the agreement his son had made with the defenders of Dornoch. Never during its history, so far as it is known, did a greater calamity befall St. Gilbert’s city than its destruction at the hands of its ruthless foes in 1570. The burning of its fine old Cathedral was in itself an irreparable disaster, which is still deplored. That a sacred edifice of such historic interest and architectural beauty, having passed unscathed through a period when many a fair





*Photo. by Messrs Davidson, Kirkcaldy*

**DORNOCH CASTLE IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**



church fabric in Scotland was marred and mutilated, should have been wrecked in a sordid clan feud is much to be regretted. The exigencies of war can, no doubt, be pleaded in extenuation of an act of wanton destruction and sacrilege such as the burning of the Cathedral by men who belonged to the diocese it served. The building ought to have been sacrosanct to them, and unless there had still persisted in Caithness some traces of resentment over the transference of the High Kirk to Dornoch, the Cathedral might probably have escaped any injury at their hands had it not become a stronghold of the enemy they sought to overthrow. In the heat of conflict higher feelings are apt to be subordinated to the passion for conquest; but, even so, it is difficult to find any justification for an outrage such as was perpetrated on this occasion, by which irreparable damage was done to the stately fane of Gilbert's creation.

The feelings of the citizens of Dornoch were still further outraged by a gross and wanton act of sacrilege committed by Sutherland of Evelix, one of the leaders of the attacking party, who, in a fit of brutal fury, desecrated the tomb of St. Gilbert and scattered with his foot the sacred relics it contained, which for centuries had been held in the utmost veneration by the people of Dornoch. Of this gross outrage Sir Robert Gordon gives the following account:—  
“ William Southerland of Ewelick wes ther principall and cheiff instrument in executing of these mischeiffs; and also wes ther instrument in burning and demolishing that church. At which tyme he opened

Gilbert his grave, burst St. Gilbert his coffin with his foot, and threw the ashes of that holy man with the wund, which enormities the Almighty God did most justlie punish; for that same foot that burst St. Gilbert his coffin did afterward rot away and consume, to the great terror of all the beholders, wherby this William Southerland grew so lothsum that no man wes able to come neir vnto him, and so he died miserablie.”<sup>31</sup> The inhabitants of Dornoch had no more bitter and relentless foe than Sutherland of Evelix, their near neighbour. According to an old tradition he erected for his own protection a fort on the highest summit of the ridge above Loch an Triall, which is known to this day as Cnoc a Chaisteal. Mr H. M. Mackay in his *Old Dornoch* tells a story associated with Sutherland’s last hours, to the effect that as he lay on his death bed his house was surrounded in the darkness of night by a party of Dornoch people eager for revenge upon their old foe. His servants raised the dying man from his bed, and having hurriedly dressed him, seated him at a table with his claymore before him. His cowardly assailants, scared by the unexpected vision of their old enemy in such a posture, fled to Dornoch, which they did not reach before the old warrior had passed away. Another tradition gives a terrible picture of the agony of his last moments based upon the popular belief that, doomed to eternal perdition for his sacrilegious outrage upon the sacred shrine of St. Gilbert, he was given over to the Devil, who came in the end to claim his victim.

Sir Robert Gordon describes the retribution that came upon the others who were mainly responsible for the destruction of Dornoch and its Cathedral. Of the Laird of Duffus, who had beheaded the hostages "at the Earle of Catteynes his command, against all humanitie and the laws of nations duellie observed among the greatest infidells," he tells that "immediatlie after the death of the pledges, the laird of Duffus seikned, and never rose agane out of his bed through the sting of conscience which he had conceived, and through the strange visions which appeired vnto him, for being accessorie and participant of the shedding of their blood. John, Mr. of Catteynes, wes shortlie thereafter punished by the hands of his owne father (whom God, in his just judgement had appoynted to be his scourge, for burning of the church of Dornogh) by famishing him to death in wofull captivitie."<sup>32</sup> For seven years the youth was confined in a dungeon in the castle of Girnigoe, where he "died at last in prissone by famine and vermine." A few months after the Master was taken prisoner, his confederate, Mackay of Strathnaver, as Sir Robert records, died "pairtlie through greiff and pairtlie through the torment and truble of conscience which he had conceived for his bypast actions." Thus was the curse fulfilled which St. Gilbert, at the close of his deed of constitution, solemnly invoked "upon those who shall destroy and injure" the fabric he then set up. Mr H. M. Mackay in his *Old Dornoch* notes regarding the families who were responsible for the destruction of Dornoch

Cathedral the interesting and significant fact that they "have been cut off, root and branch, in Sutherland and Caithness, and that not one of them now owns an acre within the wide bounds of St. Gilbert's ancient diocese."<sup>33</sup> Their punishment was not more than they deserved for the ruin they brought upon Dornoch and the desolation of its ancient sanctuary. That sacred edifice which Bishop Gilbert had centuries before erected with such toil and devotion was now a rootless and blackened ruin; the stately episcopal palace and the manses of the clergy, along with the humbler dwellings of their neighbours, were ravaged by fire; many of the citizens were slain, and others had to take refuge in exile. A goodly number made their way to Strathbogie, where the young Earl of Sutherland enjoyed the hospitality and protection of the Earl of Huntly. Sir Robert Gordon records that "John Gray of Skibo, and his sone Gilbert, retired to St. Andrews vnto Robert, bishop of Catteynes." He had gone to reside there after his appointment to the office of Commendator of the Priory, and, though he held on to his bishopric, his visits to his diocese appear to have been very occasional. He evidently escaped all the turmoil and strife of those eventful days that brought disaster and ruin to Dornoch, nor does he appear to have intervened in the stirring affairs of that time in his diocese. He was probably more concerned with the properties and revenues of his bishopric, for on October 25th, 1570, the year of Dornoch's destruction, he made a grant of Bishopfield to John Dempster, his servant's



son, "in return for a yearly payment of ten shillings, to be made to the chaplain of the Chapel of St. James within the Cathedral Church of Caithness." The charter was given at the Monastery of St. Andrews.<sup>34</sup>

The chapel of St. James to which the charter refers is first mentioned in the agreement made in 1275 between Bishop Archibald and the Earl of Sutherland regarding the allocation of certain lands, where it was provided that the Earl and his heirs should have the presentation of a chaplain to the altar of St. James in the church of Dornoch. The altar stood in the "south isle," and opinion has been divided as to whether that was the south aisle of the nave or the south transept, which was for centuries the burial place of the Earls of Sutherland. The latter theory is in all probability the correct one. The term "isle" was in olden days commonly applied to a transept, and its close association for so long a period with the House of Sutherland indicates that it was the portion of the Cathedral specially assigned to it under the old agreement of the thirteenth century. The frequency with which the name occurs in the charters of this period points to its having been the scene of many business transactions. A few examples may not be without interest. In 1551 Sir Robert Urquhard, rector of Kildonein, as procurator for Master Alexander Sutherland, dean of Cathanes, assignee of the deceased William Sutherland of Duffus, "for the redemption of the lands of Balnabrayt, went to the altar of St. James the apostle in the cathedral church of Dornoch and there paid to Hugh

Murray, the son and heir of the deceased John Murray of Cambusave, burgess of Dornoch, the sum of £30 Scots as redemption money for the said lands, whereupon Hugh Murray resigned them." They had been granted to his father by Andrew Kynnard of that ilk. The witnesses to the transaction were Valter Murray of Auchlwing, Murdoc Murray, Thomas Chesolme, Roderic Murray, and Alexander McCulloch, burgesses of Dornoch.<sup>35</sup>

In 1552 John Murray or Neilson, citizen of Dornoch, for certain favours shown him by Master Thomas Brydy, vicar pensionary of Wattin, and for a sum of money paid to him in his necessity, sold to Master Thomas and his heirs the north part of his house situated in the city of Dornoch, extending in length to forty feet from the west gable of the said house to the entry of the cemetery of Saint Finbar on the north, and thence extending in breadth from the said cemetery to the burn running before and descending through the said city as far as the high water mark ("ad maris fluvium"). Payment of a penny yearly was to be made at Whitsunday to the chaplain of the altar of St. James the apostle in the cathedral church. The witnesses were Walter Leslie, Thomas Kennochson, David Dickeson, John Talyeour, citizens, and Gillepatrick Talyeour, Sergeant.<sup>36</sup>

On 18th March, 1576, Alexander, Earl of Sutherland, "patron of Sanct James cheplenrye situat in Sanct James ile within the cathedrall kirk of Cathnes," granted the chaplainry for life to his servitor, John Forsythe, for his "anefald guid and

faithfull service " rendered by him to the Earl's deceased parents and to the Earl himself, and for other causes. A precept is addressed to Alexander Lovell of Pitgrudye, the Earl's bailie in that part, to pass to the said " Sanct James ile, and thair quhair the alter was wount to stand " to give institution to John Forsyth " be ane Scottis plak in takin of his possession of the sam." On April 2 this was done, and institution was given " super locum in quo olim altare diui Jacobi predicti edificabatur."<sup>37</sup> It would thus appear that in the burning of 1570 the altar of St. James had disappeared, and that the revenues of the chaplainry, amounting to five marks yearly, ultimately became a pension for good service and the property of a layman.

Another chaplainry attached to the Cathedral was that of Kinnauld, to which reference is made in a Sutherland charter of date 1544. It is one in which Sir Alexander Gray, chaplain of the chaplainry of Kinnauld in the cathedral church of Cathanes, and vicar penitentiary of Robert, bishop elect and confirmed, for the augmentation of his rental by the sum of 10s 4d, with the consent of the bishop, dean and chapter, granted to John Gray of Culmaly and his wife, Janet Mathesoun, and to the heirs male got between them, with remainder to Patrick Gray, the brother german of John, and to the heirs male of his body; to James Gray, the paternal cousin of John, and the heirs male of his body; to the elder of John Gray's female heirs without division, and to his heirs and assignees whomsoever, his lands of Auchinlong

lying in the diocese of Cathanes and the sheriffdom of Inverness.<sup>38</sup> According to Sir Robert Gordon, the chapel was at Kinauld. Alexander Gray was evidently determined to keep Auchinlong in his family, as this charter proves. There was a manse in Dornoch attached to the chaplainry, and its situation is defined in a charter of 1649, by which James Gray, preacher at Lairg, in return for certain sums he received from his son, Master William Gray, preacher at Clyne, conveyed to him and his heirs "titulo oneroso" the Manse of Kinald, situated in the city of Dornoch between the Manse of Assynt on the east, the "via arcti vici," "lie narrowe vynd gate" ascending to the top of the hill on the west, the common road on the north and south, and the common roads on the east and west, for a yearly payment of 6s 8d Scots old feuferme to the King, and sixteen pence in augmentation, in all eight shillings.<sup>39</sup>

Like the Bishop, and probably stimulated by his example, the other members of the chapter were eager to secure the property of the Church in their possession to their relations or to dispose of it to their own advantage, as the charters they granted clearly prove. For about thirty years the office of dean had been held by Master Alexander Sutherland, son of William Sutherland of Duffus and Jonet Innes. In 1537 he had resigned to Bishop Andrew all his rights to the lands of Achloch. He was succeeded by Master William Hepburn, who held the office from 1557 to 1562. Gavine Borthwick, the lawful son of Michael Borthwick, was presented to the deanery in

1565 by Henry and Mary, King and Queen of Scotland. In July of the following year, within the choir of the cathedral church of Dornoch, John Kennetye, as the procurator of Gavin Borthwick, was given seisin of the dean's stall and place in the chapter by Master Thomas Brady, vicar pensionary of the church of Wattin, as the Bishop's representative.<sup>40</sup> Gavin Borthwick held the deanery for the long period of forty years, and must have been an old man when he resigned office in 1607. Though he retained his office until that year, he evidently vacated his residence years before, as on 2nd September, 1589, the King grants to John Munro, writer, and to his heirs and assignees whomsoever, the manse or dwelling with croft and garden within the city and canonry of Dornoch, formerly of the deanery of Caithness, situated next the manse of the Archdeacon of Caithness on the east. The grant was made "per actum annexationis," by which the residences of the clergy in Dornoch were by royal warrant disposed of or appropriated at that time in virtue of the Act of Annexation passed in 1587.<sup>41</sup> This appears from a charter of date 10th May, 1590, by which the King grants Andrew Morrison, servitor of Mr Robert Douglas, "prepositus" of Lencluden, treasurer of the general collection and augmentations, to the heirs of the said Andrew and to his assignees whomsoever, the manses of the Vicar of Assynt, the precentorie of Caithness, treasury of Caithness, rectory and vicarage of Kildonan, chancellor of Caithness, rectory and vicarage of Far, rectory of Spittal *alias* Halkirk of

the archdeacon of Caithness, rectory and vicarage of Orlig, and rectory and vicarage of Dunnet, with their crofts, gardens, and houses in the town and chanonry of Dornoch.<sup>42</sup> This charter is of interest because of the reliable though incomplete list it gives of the residences of the clergy in Dornoch, the exact location of several of which cannot now be determined. Some of them had already been disposed of, as the following charters belonging to that period bear record.

Robert Stewart was Precentor of Caithness in September, 1562, when he leased to the Earl of Sutherland, his Countess, and their heirs for a period of 19 years his benefice of the chantry, together with his quarter of the parsonage and vicarage of Dornoch, with his glebe called the Chantourisfield, with the manse and croft in the city of Dornoch, the entry to be "at the feist of Beltane callit Phillope and Jacobi" following the above date.<sup>43</sup> The yearly rent was £100 Scots, from which was to be deducted annually the curate's fee and the fee of the staller in Dornoch. Three years before he had made a grant to the Earl of the lands attached to the chantry. His successor was Gilbert Gray, who in the year 1577, with the consent of Robert, Earl of March and Bishop of Caithness, and of the chapter, leased the chantry for thrice nineteen years to Alexander, Earl of Sutherland, and his heirs for a yearly payment of £102 Scots.<sup>44</sup> In 1579 John Gray of Sordell and Elizabeth Barclay, his wife, resigned to the Earl a thrice nineteen years' lease of one-fourth of the chantry granted to them by their son, Gilbert Gray, the chanter, with



consent of Robert, Earl of Lennox and Bishop of Cathnes, in lieu of which the Earl appointed them his assignees for the same.<sup>45</sup>

Mr John Jaksoun was Chancellor in 1560, when on November 3rd, "for certain services done and a sum of money paid to him," he granted to Alexander Lovel, in heritage, the lands of Pitgruthie with the pertinents and the culture of lands to be newly improved, lying in the Earldom of Sutherland and Sheriffdom of Inverness, and also the croft of the chancellary descending straight from his manse and the principal house and garden of the same, with its two usual particles and tails, together with the upper part of the manse and chief house of the same, being then a waste tenement, lying between the said house called the old manse and the king's high way, and bounded by the manse or waste tenement of the precentor of Cathenes on the east and the manse or waste tenement of the treasurer on the west, both contiguous, for a certain sum of money to be paid yearly to him. This grant was confirmed by the King at Holyrood House on 27th December, 1580.<sup>46</sup>

Mr William Gordon, Treasurer of Caithness, by a charter given at the church of Dornoch on 18th May, 1561, for sums of money and other favours rendered to him, grants in feufarm to Alexander Murray, son and heir of Angus Murray of Pronsie, the lands called the Treasurer's-field between the town and lands of Pitgrudy called the Chancellor's-field to the west, the lands of Balnaknok called the Archdenis-field to the

east, "torrentem de Dornoch" called the Chan-toures-field to the south, the common moor to the north, in the baronies of Skibo and Dornoch. The charter was witnessed by Masters John Turnbull, James Ferne, Farquhar Leslie, and Robert Bonal, chaplains of the church of Dornoch. The charter was confirmed by the King at the Castle of Stirling on 2nd April, 1580. Precept was given to John Gray of Swordale, Alexander Rattray, burgess of Dornoch, and Thomas Murray, bailie of the same.<sup>47</sup>

By a charter given at Dornoch on 12th September, 1556, Master James Brady, Archdeacon of Caithness, with consent of John Sinclair, his colleague and successor in the said archdiaconate, and that of the bishop and chapter, grants to Alexander Murray McSchirangus, his heirs and assignees whomsoever bearing the arms and name of Murray, the lands of Ballinknok in the earldom of Sutherland. The charter is witnessed by Mr William Gordon, Treasurer of Caithness, Thomas Brady, notary public, and John Brady. The charter was confirmed by the King at Holyrood on 29th November, 1586.<sup>47</sup>

At the same place in 1586 the King confirmed a charter given at Skelbo on July 31st, 1573, by John Watson *alias* Wobster, Rector of Canisbay, by which, with the consent of the bishop, dean, and chapter, he granted in feu farm to Alexander Lovell of Pitgrudie and Elizabeth Dischington, his spouse, the manse and croft of Canisbay in the town of Dornoch, to be held by the said Alexander and Elizabeth, the survivor of them, and their heirs and assignees whomsoever, of

the said rector for a yearly payment. Precept was given to John Mathesoun in Sydra and Thomas Quhyt. The witnesses were John Gray of Swordale, Magnus Williamson and Farquhar Leslie, servants of the said John.<sup>49</sup>

Another charter confirmed by the King at Stirling Castle was one given by Bishop Robert at St. Andrews on 23rd July, 1576, by which, with consent of the chapter and canons, for favours and the payment of a sum of money, he granted in feu farm to John Gray and Elizabeth Barclay, his wife, the survivor and their heirs and assignees, the lands of Teachlyb in the barony of Skibo.<sup>50</sup>

These charters are of interest, not only as evidence of the eagerness of these dignitaries to dispose of the property attached to their offices and as indicating the situation and condition of the manses mentioned, but also as proof of the fact that Bishop Robert, who had become Earl of Lennox on the death of his brother in 1570, still retained his hold of the bishopric of Caithness and drew its revenues.

Other deeds of this period disposing of properties within the Burgh of Dornoch are of sufficient interest to merit notice for the light they shed upon the locality. In 1545 John Murray of Cambusave, Sir Robert Makraith, vicar of Kilmalie, Farquhard McIntailyour, Thomas Kenyeochsone, John Tailyour, Alexander McCull, Thomas and Walter Murray, William McAnè Moir, Alexander Gar, John Awloche and others, designated as fellow-burgesses and fellow-neighbours of Dornoch, granted on behalf of the community to

their fellow-burgess, Thomas Mowete, a waste portion of the commonty situated within the king's highway leading to the Innoche on the east, the Blechinghill on the south, the common ford of the burn running before and through the burgh on the north, and the said burn wholly on the west, for which he was to pay 4d Scots yearly to the bailies of Dornoch in the name of burgh ferme. It is of interest to note that this grant was witnessed, among others, by John McBrady, sergeant of the burgh.<sup>51</sup> In 1567 Mariot Mowat, daughter of the deceased Thomas, was seized in the bit of ground granted to her father twenty-two years before.

In 1562 Robert Duf or McDonald McDavid, a burgess of Dornoch, sold to Alexr. Murray or Angus-sone, also a burgess, a house in the burgh called The Kill, situated at the foot of the bridge, having his garden on the south, the common road on the north, the water of Dornoch on the west, and the said garden on the east, to be held in burgage at the usual rate, with power to repair and roof the house, especially on the south side next his garden, to the extent of three feet when required. This was apparently the property known as Kilncroft.<sup>52</sup>

In 1563 Robert McDonald McDavid, citizen of Dornoch, for a sum of money paid him in his necessity sold to Master Thomas Brodie, vicar pensionary of Wattin, and his heirs, his garden on the east side of the city of Dornoch, with his house on the west side of that garden, lying betwixt the tenement of Walter Lesly on the south, the kiln of Alexander Murray of







Balleknok on the north, the king's high way on the east, and the burn on the west, to be held of the bishop, on condition that Thomas Brody paid to the chaplain of St. James the usual yearly rent, if demanded.<sup>53</sup>

Alexander Murray of Balleknok was one of the bailies of Dornoch, and is so designated in a sasine he gave in 1568 of a house situated between the cemetery of St. Finbar on the west, the burn or water of Dornoch on the east, the common road on the south, and the tenement of Mr Thomas Braydy on the north. Among the witnesses to this document are William Clerk, "sutor," and Walter Murray, sergeant of Dornoch.<sup>54</sup>

The Protocol Book of William Gray, notary public, contains the copy of a charter by which Thomas Murray, burgess of Dornoch, granted to his son certain crofts and subjects round the city, in which occur the names of crofts whose names have disappeared, and whose situation cannot with any degree of certainty be now determined. In 1573 Alexander McWilliam McAne Moir was given sasine of certain crofts at Dornoch bounded by the hill called Knoklot. This also is recorded in an entry made in the Protocol Book of William Gray.

Bishop Robert had been commissioned by the General Assembly of 1563, of which he was a member, to plant kirks in his diocese, and he received the thanks of the Assembly of 1570 for his diligence in executing his commission. With the exception of the Bishop himself, few of the leading clergy in this

diocese had entered the Reformed Church : they preferred to retire upon the pensions that had been provided for them. An Act of Privy Council in 1562 assigned one-third of the revenues of the Roman Church to the clergy of the Reformed Church and gave two-thirds in liferent to the old beneficiaries, whose maintenance was thus assured. The Protestant clergy were few in number and poorly paid, so that readers, with but little education and no training for the ministry, had to be employed in many parishes. A list of the clergy of the diocese in 1567 includes the name of William Gray, who was exhorter at Dornoch. He knew Gaelic, and appears to have held the office of Treasurer from 1577 until 1602, when he was succeeded in that office by his son James, minister at Lairg, while another son, George, became minister of Dornoch. Owing to the widespread dilapidations of benefices by the nobles the clergy were in abject poverty, and in 1571 their grievances were set forth in a representation made by the Protestant barons to the Regent, which paints a dark picture of their distress. It gives expression to their sorrow that "dumbe dogges" were admitted "to the office dignitie, and rents appointed for sustentatioun of preaching pastors," and declares that "our poor ministers bound to their charge, are compelled to keepe their hous, and with dolorous hearts see their wives, childrein, and familie, sterve for hunger, and that, becaus your Grace and greedie courteours violentlie reave, and unjustlie consume that which

just law and good order hath appointed for their sustentatioun.’’<sup>55</sup> That same year it would appear that the ministers in the North were hardly treated by the barons who adhered to the Roman Church, who insisted that they should remember in their public prayers the deposed Queen Mary. The lot of the Reformed clergy in the North was indeed a hard one, as they had to endure poverty and persecution, and so precarious was the position of Protestantism in the Highlands that the General Assembly resolved to send representatives armed with the authority of the Church to visit the remote parts and take whatever steps might be necessary for the furtherance of the Reformed faith in those regions where Roman Catholicism retained its hold.

In 1574 the General Assembly sent two commissioners to visit Sutherland and Caithness and report upon the ecclesiastical situation there, with authority to deal with it as they thought fit. The minute of their appointment is as follows :—

“ At Edinburgh, the elleventh day of August, the yeere of God 1574 yeeres, the whole Kirk presentlie assembled, in one voice and minde giveth full commissioun, speciall power, and charge to their loved brethrein, Mr Robert Grahame, Archdeacon of Rosse, and Mr Johne Robertsoune, Treasurer thereof, conjunctlie and severallie, to passe to the countreis of Caithnesse and Sutherland, and there to visite kirks, colledges, and schooles, and other places needfull, within the same bounds; and in the samine to plant ministers, readers, elders, and deacons, schoolmasters, and other members necessar and requisite

for erecting a perfyte reformed kirk; suspend for a time or simpliciter deprive suche as they sall find unworthie, or not apt for their office, whether it be for crimes committed or ignorance; abolish, eradicat, and destroy all monuments of idolatrie; establish and sett up the true worship of the eternall God, als weill in cathedral and colledge kirks, as in other places within the said bounds, conforme to the order tane and agreed upon in the Booke of Discipline; and als to searche and inquire the names of all these that possesse benefices within the said bounds, at whose provisioun they have beene; and if anie vaike, or happin to vaike, within the commissionarie, to confer and give the samine to the persons qualified and being presented by the just patrons of the samine, due examination preceding; to reject and refuse suche as they shall find unable, and not apt thereto, as they will answeere to God and the kirk thereupon. Their diligence to be done herein, with thir presents, to report them to the nixt Assemblie Generall, where it sall happin to be for the time."

The terms of this remit afford evidence of the anxiety of the Assembly to build up and strengthen the Reformed Church in a remote district where Roman Catholicism still held ground, to remove all abuses, and to further the cause of education among a people who were notoriously ignorant. Had the Commissioners been provided with sufficient funds for their mission, in addition to being armed with the authority of the Kirk, much would no doubt have been accomplished in the way of reform. As it was, their mission appears to have been ineffective, and in

1575, for lack of diligence in his visitation, Robert Grahame was deprived of his commission, which was transferred to Mr George Hay, minister of Turriff. These Commissioners administered the affairs of the diocese after Bishop Robert had gone to reside in St. Andrews. Their appointment proves that, though the conflict between decadent Romanism and nascent Protestantism was short and decisive in the South, the struggle was a prolonged one in the North, where conservatism in matters of religion and aversion to any change of faith have ever been characteristic of the people. With the same obstinacy with which they had resisted the supersession of the Celtic Church by that of Rome did they now oppose the passing away of that great hierarchy. It took many a day for the great tidal wave of the Reformation to submerge Romanism in the remote recesses of the far North.



*CHAPTER V*

## THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were periods of fierce ecclesiastical controversy in Scotland. The conflict between Romanism and Protestantism was followed by a prolonged struggle for supremacy between Presbyterianism and Episcopacy, that kept the country in a state of turmoil for a long time. Episcopacy was always enforced by the Sovereign and rejected by the people who, except in the north, favoured Presbyterianism. In the diocese of Caithness the Roman Church still retained its hold, though the bishop had, for his own ends, professed to espouse the new faith, and the General Assembly of the Reformed Church made repeated efforts to propagate it. Although Romanism had been suppressed in most parts of the country, the framework of the old Church still remained. Most of the cathedrals were defaced; the abbeys were wrecked; the parish churches were denuded of their images: otherwise there was little change. Bishops drew two-thirds of their revenues; the clergy continued to occupy their manse, and kept possession of their churches, particularly in the Highlands. The Reformed clergy had claimed the Church revenues as their property, but the barons had appropriated a large portion of them. Many vacant dioceses were given to bishops on condition that they



handed over to their patrons part of the episcopal revenues. More than one-half of the parishes were without regular ministers; but as their number increased, Presbyteries and Synods came to be formed in addition to the General Assembly and Kirk-Sessions, which were the only church courts in existence at the Reformation.

In 1580 the General Assembly unanimously declared the office of a diocesan bishop to be "unlawful and without warrant in the Word of God," and called upon all holding that office to demit it. In defiance of this mandate of the supreme court of the Church many bishops retained their dioceses, and were allowed to do so. Among those who ignored the order of the General Assembly was Bishop Robert Stewart, who had resigned to his nephew the earldom of Lennox to which he had succeeded on the death of his brother in 1571, and had then been created Earl of March by the King. He continued to make St. Andrews his place of residence, and enriched by the combined revenues of his bishopric and the Priory he appears to have spent the evening of his life in self-indulgence and luxury. James Melville in his diary complains bitterly of the conduct of the bishop and "his gentlemen-pensionars, wha colluded with the rewallars of the town to hold the ministerie vacand, and in the meantyme tuk up the stipend, and spendit the sam, with the rent of the kirk-rents of the Pryorie, at the goff, archerie, guid cheir . . ." That the Presbyterian form of church government did not commend itself to Bishop Robert is indicated by the

appointment of commissioners by the Assembly of 1580 to summon the bishops of Caithness and Brechin to its next meeting in order that they might give their submission and assent to an agreement made with the other bishops, which virtually meant the adoption of the Presbyterian form of government. The Earl of Sutherland seems to have paid a visit to Bishop Robert at St. Andrews in February, 1580, when, as the result of negotiations between them, the Bishop made a re-grant to the Earl of the feu lands of the bishopric. Among the lands included were "Wester Skebo, Skebo Castle with fortalice and pendicles, viz., Braymerte, lie Eister-pairt of Skebo called Ducatland, the dovecot and its brewery, Sithera, Ullestie, Ardaleis, Feritoun *cum cimba et passagio*, Davachfyn, Drumdevan, Auchevaich with the pendicles called Auchegormela and Auchenicolais, mill of Skebo, palace of Dornoch with the crofts and their acres and tenements." The charter also conveys the hereditary office of constable of the palace, of Scrabster, Skibo, and Dornoch, the hereditary office of bailie of all the said lands, likewise of the other towns, the bounds and possessions whatsoever of the said bishopric, which the said Alexander personally resigned, and which the said bishop granted to him anew "in feudiforma." Included also were "lie ailhouses," with the crofts and tenements in the city of Dornoch, and "lie assise aill et tholl ejusdem." As the custodier of Skibo Castle the Earl was to receive the dues of Skibo Mains, with the said pendicles and lie ailhouses and other lands of the barony

of Skibo, amounting to 63 libs. 12 sol. 8 den., while for the custody of the palace of Dornoch he was given the rents and duties of the said tenements in the town of Dornoch and adjacent lands, amounting to 40 lib. 6 sol. 8 den. The grant provides that the said castles should be maintained at the expense of the bishop for his reception as long as he should remain there, on condition that, if the said Earl should build and repair them anew without the advice (“*absque avisamento*”) of the said bishop, that would be done at the expense of the said earl, to whom the bishop assigned in feu for the discharge of the duties of bailie 100 lib. from the readier rents of the said lands. The Earl in return obliged himself to pay to the Bishop during his lifetime 1000 marks yearly, which included an additional payment said to have been made for “favours and kindnesses” done by the Bishop. The original charter is preserved at Dunrobin, and is a lengthy and interesting document.<sup>1</sup>

In 1583 the King revoked all grants of Crown lands with the exception of the assignations of the thirds of the Bishopric of Caithness and Priory of St. Andrews, which he made over to his grand-uncle, Bishop Robert, who no doubt appreciated this mark of the royal favour. King James was no friend to Presbyterianism, at the very roots of which a serious blow was struck, at his instigation, by a series of five Acts passed by Parliament in 1584, which utterly destroyed the freedom of the Church, established Episcopacy anew, and secured it by penal sanctions. For the eight years that followed the passing of the

“Black Acts,” as they were called, ecclesiastical chaos reigned in Scotland. Three years later the Act of Annexation was passed, by which the temporalities of all benefices were attached to the Crown; the teinds were conserved, but the lands were secularised. Bishop Robert passed away before this Act came into operation. He died at St. Andrews in the spring of 1586, and was buried in St. Leonard’s Church, where a handsome marble monument marks his last resting place. It bears a Latin inscription which may be translated thus :—“ Here I leave behind me both the honours and the troubles of the world : take example from me and withdraw from its vanities.” The entry regarding him in the Privy Council Register is hardly a eulogium. It is dated “ 1586, 2 April,” and merely states that “ between this meeting of Council and the last—*i.e.* on March 29, 1586—there died, *ætat.* 70, the King’s great-uncle, Robert Stewart, Earl of March, and formerly Earl of Lennox, memorable for many reasons, but chiefly as having been the husband for some time of the lady who was the wife of Arran. As he had been nominal Bishop of Caithness since 1542, that bishopric was now vacant.”<sup>2</sup> If, as the minute suggests, so august a body as the Privy Council, of which he was a member, considered his most noteworthy achievement to have been his marriage to Lord Lovat’s widow and the Earl of Atholl’s oldest daughter, who divorced him, its pronouncement was a scathing commentary on the career of a man whose high lineage and exalted position gave him ample opportunity of accomplishing great things for

his country and for his Church. His description as “the nominal Bishop of Caithness” was justified by his neglect of the duties of that high office, and not without reason has he been stigmatised as a “merciless despoiler of the Kirk.”

Of the clergy upon whom, in the Bishop’s absence, the burden of the work of his diocese lay, but little is known. Mr William Gray was Treasurer of Caithness in 1571, for in June of that year he “granted to John Chisholm of Achthesaurar and his heirs and assignees whomsoever the manse of the Treasurer of Caithness in the city of Dornoch (between the manses of the Chancellor to the east and of the Archdeacon to the west), with two crofts, viz., the Treasurer’s croft (between the crofts of the Chancellor and Archdeacon, croft Camvik and the common moor), and the other crofts between the crofts of Walter Leslie, Thomas Wyris and Thomas Polson of Meikle Creich.”<sup>3</sup> In addition to the payment of a certain sum of money he was to “receive the said treasurer within the upper rooms of the said manse, as often as it might seem good to him.” It was a somewhat unusual arrangement, but it ensured for the Treasurer accommodation in Dornoch at such times as he might have to be resident there. The witnesses to the charter were Thomas and Angus Murray, citizens of Dornoch; Robert McRuth, Bailie there; William Gray, notary public. The charter was confirmed by the King at Holyrood on November 11th, 1586. Mr William Gray held the office of Treasurer until 1602. His predecessors in

the Treasurership during the episcopate of Bishop Robert Stewart were Master William Gordon, who was Rector of Duthil when he was presented by Queen Mary to the Treasurership in 1547, which he held until 1564 or later, and his successor, Master David Carnegy, who held office only for a short time.

The Chancellors during the same period were Sir John Mathesoun, who in 1548, along with the Bishop, had to find surety to answer before the civil courts for seizing the fruits of the bishopric, and Master John Jaksoun, who held office until 1560; he was succeeded by Master John Synclar, who was promoted from the position of Archdeacon. That office he had held for a time as "coadjutor and successor" to Master James Brady, and he in turn was succeeded by Master Robert Innes in 1577. At Holyrood on 8th October, 1592, the King confirmed a charter by Mr Robert Innes, Archdeacon of Caithness, by which, with consent of the dean and chapter, for a sum of money expended upon the repair of the church and manse of the said archdiaconate, he made a grant of certain properties to John Sinclair of Dun and his heirs male bearing the name and arms of Sinclair.<sup>4</sup> The grant must have been made soon after the death of Bishop Robert, as no mention is made of the Bishop's consent. The office of Dean during the same period was held first by Master Alexander Sutherland, son of William Sutherland of Duffus, who occupied that position for over twenty years; he was followed by Master William Hepburn, who is said to have built the Bishop's Palace. At his death in 1565 Henrie and Marie,



King and Queen of Scots, presented Gavine Borthwick to the Deanery, which he held until 1607.

The Chantorship in 1559 was held by Robert Stewart, who, for certain sums of money and other favours bestowed upon him by the Earl of Sutherland, "granted to him all his lands known as Chantourisfield lying between the town and the lands of Denisfield on the west, Archdenisfield to the east, descending to the lands of Auchekoch towards the south, and the Thesaurarisfield on the north."<sup>5</sup> He was followed by Gilbert Gray, son of John Gray of Skibo, who was succeeded in 1583 by Donald Logan, minister of Creych, whom the King presented to the Chantry of Caithness vacant by the resignation of Gilbert Gray.

An Act of Parliament, known as "The General Band," was passed in 1587 for the preservation of order in the Borders and the Highlands, where it had little effect until the Privy Council took the matter up in 1590, when the Earl of Sutherland and others had to find caution for the maintenance of peace. The closing week of 1592 was marked by the discovery of a plot to overthrow Protestantism in Scotland, in which the Catholic barons of the north were to have the assistance of a Spanish army. Its discovery created intense excitement among the Protestant clergy, whose determination to have the traitors punished made it necessary for the King to take action. The Earl of Sutherland was summoned before the Privy Council; but he could not face the long journey owing to the state of his health, a plea which

was supported by the testimony of the ministers of Rogart and Loth. About the same time a convention was held at Aberdeen of barons and noblemen, who "made a band for the suretie" of the Protestant religion. The only representative from the diocese of Caithness was William Sutherland of Duffus; the Earls of Sutherland and Caithness were conspicuous by their absence. They both favoured Romanism, though they adopted a neutral attitude towards religion, and their vassals were content to follow their lords in this as in all other matters. The strength of Roman Catholicism in the north at that time is revealed in a petition presented to the King by the General Assembly of the Reformed Church in 1586, to the effect "that seeing Papistrie aboundeth in the north, by reasoun of the skant of qualified ministers there, for laike of sufficient provisioun and stipend, that there assignatiouns may be made unto them conformable unto the ministrie in the south." The King's response to this petition is not recorded; it is known, however, that he wished to deal leniently with his nobles in the north who were still attached to the Roman Church. He resented the clamorous demand the Protestant clergy made for the confiscation of their estates and their banishment. At that time Presbyterianism was supreme in Scotland owing to the passing in 1592 of an Act which is known as the "Magna Charta of Presbytery." But it had not captured the north, and so concerned was the General Assembly of 1588 about the situation there that it made a complaint to the King that the "Erle of

Sutherland, with his ladie and friends, Papists," were "vehementlie suspected kielie to have had masse," and that they were "contemners of the Word and Sacraments." Of the Commissioners appointed to administer the affairs of the Church in Sutherland and to suppress Papacy there, the most notable was Mr Robert Pont, minister of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, one of the Lords of Session, and at one time Provost of Trinity College. He was one of the ablest and most courageous ministers of his time, and he is said on one occasion to have administered a severe rebuke to King James from the pulpit of St. Cuthbert's. He was presented to the vacant bishopric of Caithness; but before accepting that office he craved the judgment of the Assembly, and offered to act as minister of Dornoch, if that was more agreeable to the supreme court. The Assembly's reply to the King's letter of nomination acknowledges his Majesty's command "willing us to elect our brother Mr Robert Pont to the bishopric of Caithness vacant by the decease of umquhile Robert, Earl of March, your highness' uncle," and goes on to say:—"We praise God that your Majesty hath a good opinion and estimation of such a person as we judge the said Mr Robert to be, whom we acknowledge indeed to be already a bishop, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, and qualified to use the function of a pastor or minister at the church of Dornoch or any other church within your highness' realm where he is lawfully called, and worthy to have a competent living appointed to him therefor, as also to use the office of a visitor or commissioner within

the bounds or diocese of Caithness, if he be burdened therewith." The Assembly, however, refused to recognise "the corrupt state or office of them who have been termed bishops heretofore." The sturdy and fearless adherence of the Assembly to the principles of Presbyterianism was evidently too much for the King, as the bishopric remained vacant, and Pont had to be content with the office of Commissioner, which he appears to have held until a few years before his death in 1608.

Earl Alexander, whose indisposition in 1593 made it impossible for him to obey the summons of the Privy Council, died at Dunrobin on December 6th, 1594, and was interred in Dornoch Cathedral. It was he who arranged for the alteration in the date of St. Barr's Fair from 25th September to 10th October. The Act of Parliament of 1592 legalizing the change gives the reasons for it, and is as follows:—"Oure Soverane Lord being informit of ye greit skaith and damage sustenit be the inhabitants of the toun of dornoch in Sutherland and the bounds nixt adiacent throw the halding of the fair of barris fair upoun the xxv day of September at the said toune of dornoch, Quhen as the cornis ar standand upoun the groand stoukit and sa comonlie eittin and distroyit be ye guidis reparing to the said fair, Quhilk dyuers tymes engendering dyuers stryffis and contentions betuix the awnaris of ye cornis and the awnaris of ye guidis. For Remeid yrof and to put away the occasion of ye said skaith and truble in tyme cuming" alters date to 10th October, "that thairby the cornis upoun ye

ground may be inbrocht and the skaith and truble sustenit of befour may be preventit.’’<sup>6</sup>

Earl Alexander was the guardian of young Sutherland of Forse, and he exercised his authority by the selection of a wife for his ward. He could not compel the young man to wed her; but, in the event of his refusal to do so, the Earl protested for payment of twice the marriage duty. According to the procuratory, dated Dunrobin, 12th February, 1593, John Gordon in Gilliecallumkeill was appointed “to proceed to the presence of the said Alexander Sutherland of Forss, and offer to him in marriage Margaret Gordon, lawful daughter of the deceased John Gordon of Buckie, requiring him to receive her and to solemnise their marriage in Dornoch Kirk on 15th April, 1593, and in case of refusal to protest solemnly for the double avail of his marriage and all cost and damage that might ensue.” According to a notarial instrument drawn up at Pitmeane and attested by Jasper Cumming, clerk of the diocese, the above instrument was duly executed by John Gordon on the day it was issued, at about two o’clock in the afternoon.’’ There is no record as to whether the marriage took place or not; but the deed is of interest as evidence of the arbitrary way in which matrimonial affairs were sometimes arranged in those days. Another illustration is provided by an interview which took place at Dornoch a few years later between the young Earl of Sutherland and George Ross of Balnagown. The Earl was Sir Robert Gordon’s brother, and succeeded to the Earldom when he was nineteen



years of age. The historian states that he and his brother were educated at Dornoch school, under the tuition of Mr William Pape, whom he describes as "a reasonable good scholar, and of a quick and reddie wiht." The Earl met the Laird of Balnagown at Dornoch in February, 1598, when it was arranged that the marriage of David Ross, Balnagown's son and heir, to Lady Mary Gordon, the Earl's sister, who had been contracted in 1583, should take place before November 11th. Her dowry was to be 4000 marks, and the Earl agreed to resign any rights his father had acquired in the lands of Balnagown to the said David Ross and his heirs. It was agreed that, should there be no heirs-male of the marriage, a number of gentlemen—six representing either side—should meet at Dornoch on the last day of November, when occasion required, to choose an heir-male bearing the name and arms of Ross. They had authority to fill up any vacancy in their number caused by death, and to choose an oversman, whose decision the parties to the agreement bound themselves to accept. The Earl of Sutherland was represented on this tribunal by Mackay of Farr, Angus Murray, citizen in Dornoch, Hugh Gordon of Ballalone, Alexander Gordon of Ciderhall, John Gordon of Golspietower, and John Gordon of Kilcolmkill. The original contract, dated February 21st, 1598, is in the Dunrobin charter-room.

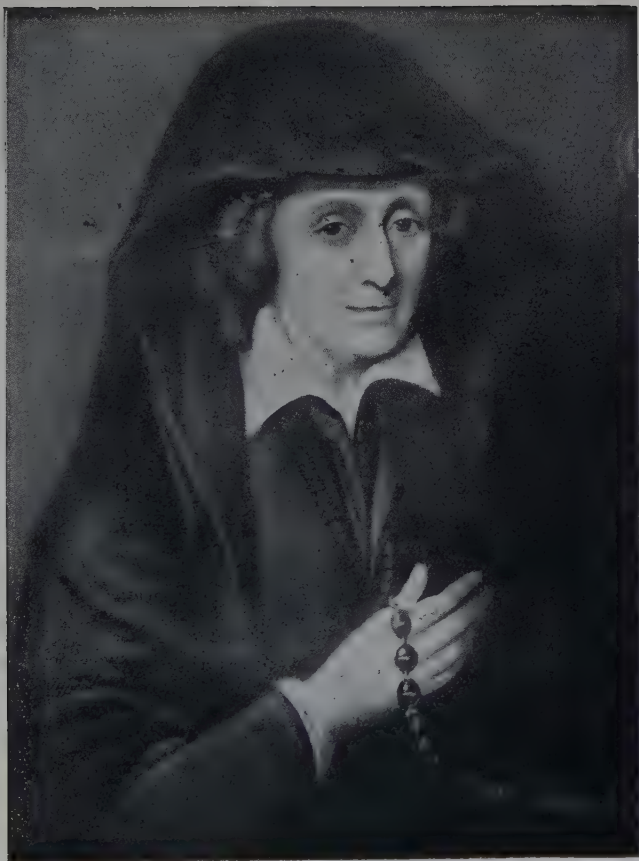
The Earl married on 1st February, 1601, the daughter of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, whose influence obtained for him, on April 29th of



that year, "a new infeftment of the whole earledome of Southerland by resignation thereof into his Majestie's hands . . . not onlie confirming the old regalitie of the earledome of Southerland, granted by King David Bruce to William, the third of that name, Earle of Southerland, the year 1347, bot also cunteyning divers other privileges." Though Earl John appears to have made Dornoch Castle, to some extent, his residence, which showed his partiality for the old burgh, he seems to have been impressed by the possibilities of Brora and anxious to encourage its development, for he created it into a free burgh of barony and regality to be called Inverbrora. At the same time all the feu lands of the diocese were erected into a sherifffdom, and Brora was constituted the chief burgh of Sutherland. It is doubtful if this enactment ever took effect, as Mr H. M. Mackay in his *Old Dornoch* points out that, "as far back as records go, the Regality Court House was at Evelex."<sup>8</sup> The Earl's intention, however, was distinctly favourable to Brora. His adherence to the old faith of his family, at a time when the principles of the Reformation were supreme in Scotland, must have been due to the influence of his mother, who was an ardent Catholic. She was suspected of harbouring Papists, and was bound over to appear before the Privy Council and find caution in 2000 marks "not to reset or have dealings with any of the king's declared traitors, or with the Jesuits, seminary priests, Papists, etc."<sup>9</sup> Though the Earl did not obtrude his religion he had to suffer for it. The General Assembly in 1602

appointed a minister to reside for three months with the Earl and his family, and instruct them in the principles of the Reformed faith. At a convention of ministers held at Linlithgow in 1606 it was ordained that the Earl, his wife and mother should be warded in Inverness, so that they might receive the benefit of religious instruction from the ministers there. This order, however, does not appear to have taken effect, and the Earl escaped further annoyance for a time. In 1604 the Earl of Orkney paid him a visit, to which Sir Robert Gordon makes this reference:—"The Earle of Orkney haveing passed his tyme a whyle at Dornogh, honorablie intertyned with comedies, and all other sports and recreations that Earl John culd mak him, he returned into his own cuntrey."<sup>10</sup>

Sir Robert Gordon records an event which occurred in 1600 and brought both entertainment and profit to the citizens of Dornoch. "The yeir of God 1600 fourteen great whaills, of huge bignes, were casten in the sea, vpon the sands vnder the toun of Dornogh, in Southerland. They came in alyve, and were slain immediatlie by the inhabitants, who reaped some commoditie therby; some of these fishes wer 90 feett in lenth." He also tells of two shipwrecks that occurred in the neighbourhood of the Little Ferry. "About this tyme tuo great ships wer cast away vpon the cost of Southerland; the one wes driven in at Vnes, and wes full of Norway timber. All the men werr washed out of this ship by the waves of the sea, and so drowned, befor they could reach the harbour. The other wes a Dutch ship, full of divers.



JEAN GORDON, COUNTESS OF SUTHERLAND



commodities, and were cast vpon the sands of Clentredale." He goes on to say that "ther wes some little controversie for these ships and whales" between the Lord Admiral and the Earl of Sutherland, "bot it wes quicklie taken away," the former resigning any rights he had.<sup>11</sup>

The bishopric had been vacant during the period following the death of Bishop Robert Stewart, when Presbyterianism was in the ascendant. Meanwhile King James, bent upon the restoration of Episcopacy, inserted the thin edge of the wedge by his appointment of Commissioners from among the clergy to sit in Parliament and Council, which they could do only as bishops. Three new bishops for Aberdeen, Ross, and Caithness were nominated "in the ecclesiastical convention at Holyroodhouse on October 14, 1600," and on November 5th, 1600, George Gladstones was appointed by the King to the bishopric of Caithness. A son of the Town Clerk of Dundee, he was a graduate of St. Andrews University, and was minister of St. Andrews in 1597. He began his career in the Church as Reader at Montrose in 1585, and before his promotion to St. Andrews he held several charges in Forfar and Mearns. He is said to have been "a man most learned, eloquent, and of great invention," whose "pauits, learning, and readiness" were remarkable. He married Christian, daughter of Mr John Durie, minister of Montrose, and had a son, Alexander, who became Archdean of St. Andrews. In 1599 Gladstones became Vice-Chancellor of St. Andrews University, and the duties of that office so

absorbed his attention that it is extremely doubtful if he ever visited his northern diocese. He was admitted into the Privy Council in 1602, and was one of the Commissioners appointed to negotiate the Treaty of Union with England. He attended as Bishop of Caithness the meeting of Parliament of April 10, 1604; soon thereafter he became Archbishop of St. Andrews. His consecration to that office did not take place until 1610; five years later he died in the Castle of St. Andrews.

Mention is made of the "gaits" of the town in a deed of 1603, by which Donald Makphail, citizen of Dornoch, was appointed procurator for a Dundee lady—Mrs Andrew Ramsay, only daughter of Robert Matheson, Dornoch—to obtain for her by precept of *clare constat* from "George Glaidstanis bishop of Kaitneis" infeftment in a tenement of land lying in the town of Dornoch "betuix the commoun gait of the said toune at the north, the kirkyard of Dorno at the eist, and the commoun king's gait at the west and south pairtis."<sup>12</sup> In November of that same year "an inquest was held in the tolbooth of the burgh of Dornoch by thirteen burgesses, who declared that the deceased Robert Mathesone, sadler of the said burgh, the father of Barbara Mathesone, died last vest and seised in the dwelling commonly called the Bischopis Lichting Place, with the houses and buildings erected on the same, lying on the west side of the burgh between the common roads on the south, west, and north, and the cemetery of the church of Saint Gilbert on the east, and that she was his lawful heir and of



lawful age."<sup>13</sup> The names of the burgesses are interesting as indicating the composition of the community at that time. They are Donald Makphail, Richard Murray, Alexander McKraith, William Clunes, Alexander Clark, Alexander Murray, Thomas Veir, Thomas Ratter, George Dickson, Thomas Fiddes, William Murray McKane McKwatt, Thomas Murray Angusson, and John Murray McKwatt. Three years later the same property was granted by Master Alexander Forbes, bishop of Caithness, to William Sanderson, for services he had rendered, for the yearly payment of 3s 4d.<sup>14</sup>

Alexander Forbes was appointed by the Crown to the bishopric of Caithness on November 22nd, 1604. He was the son of an Aberdeenshire laird, John Forbes of Ardmurdo, a man of eminent piety. Alexander was a graduate of St. Andrews University, and had also studied at that of Heidelberg. He was minister of Fettercairn before his promotion to the bishopric. Forbes was consecrated in Brechin Cathedral in 1611 by Archbishop Gladstones, his predecessor in the bishopric, to whom we are indebted for the information that the ceremony took place "in sight of such a multitude of people as I never saw in such bounds." He appears to have been present at the meeting of Parliament in 1606 which repealed the Act of Annexation, as it concerned episcopal lands. It is recorded that on the opening day "ten bishops did ryde betwixt the erles and the lords, two and two, clothed in silke and velvet, with their foote mantles," and that "Mr Alexander Forbasse, Bishop

of Cathness," rode side by side with "Mr Alexander Dowglass, Bishop of Murrey."<sup>15</sup> The condition of the diocese in his time was deplorable, as may be gathered from several entries in the Privy Council Register. One of these is to the effect that "the chief cause of the frequent stouthreifs, murders, and slaughters committed within the bounds of Caithness, Sutherland, Strathnaver and Ross, is reset given to the authors of the said crimes by the noblemen, barons, and gentlemen within the said bounds," who give them encouragement "to insist in their wickedness and evill deedes."<sup>16</sup> In 1611 the King issued a special warrant to admit Bishop Forbes to the Privy Council on account of the "incivile and barbarous behaviour of the most parte of our subjects of Caithnes, Sutherland, and Strathnaver." The Bishop appears to have repaired to his diocese soon after his consecration, for the Privy Council records bear that his absence was excused until the month of November. The Council gave him and others a commission to apprehend certain Jesuits and priests in the diocese of Caithness who were doing their utmost, by the circulation of literature as also by public and private discourses, "to divert the simple and ignorant people from the true religion to popish errors and superstition." At the Glasgow Assembly of 1610, which restored Episcopacy, the Bishop of Caithness, Mr William Pope, Mr Thomas Paipe, and Mr James Gray were present from the diocese of Caithness. In 1616, on behalf of the clergy of Scotland, Bishop Forbes at London consented to the absolution of the Marquis of

Huntly by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He became Bishop of Aberdeen in July, 1616, and died the following year.

An outstanding and memorable event in his episcopate was the great storm of 5th November, 1605, which did serious damage in the North. At Dornoch the gale was so fierce that it blew down the pillars of the north aisle of the Cathedral nave, which, since the burning of 1570, was roofless and exposed to the fury of the storm. In his account of the disaster Sir Robert Gordon attributes it to the powers of evil, and associates it with the attempt of Guy Fawkes, that same night, to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London. "The same verie night," he says "that this execrable plott should have been put in execution, all the inner stone pillers of the north syd of the body of the cathedrall church at Dornogh (laiking the rooff befor) were blowen from the verie roots and foundation, quyt and clein over the outer walls of the church; which walles did remane nevertheless standing, to the great astonishment of all such as hath sein the same."<sup>17</sup> The old edifice ravaged by fire was now wrecked by tempest.

An agreement was made at Over Pronsie in 1606 between William Sutherland of Duffus and the bailies and community of Dornoch with the consent of John, Earl of Sutherland, whereby arbiters were appointed to "sight the marches" between the town of Dornoch and the lands and baronies of Skelbo and Pronsie, regarding which there appears to have been some uncertainty. That the matter in dispute should have

been submitted to arbitration rather than to force of arms indicated a marked improvement in the relations between the parties, and a desire for a more peaceful method of settlement than they had been wont to adopt in such circumstances. The arbiters decided “that the comon hie gate that passes betuix the lands of Auchthoiche and the eistmost feild of Nether Pronsie passand up to Raghan sal be ane speciall proper merche betuix the saidis landis comontie and properties of the toune of Dornoch and the litle townes and suburbs thairabout haldin of the kirk and the said baronie of Pronsie on the eist part—and the said litle hill and sheling callit Rachan to be ane proper meithe and merche of the saidis toune of Dornoch and kirklandis forsaidis at the north syde—and all that is beeist the said gate and feild of Rachan to be as propertie to the said towne of Dornoch and utheris suburbs forsaidis—and the haill landis and utheris lyand bewest the said gate and feild of Rachan to be ane proper part and pertinent apertening to the saidis barones of Pronsie and Skelbo—the comon moore about Rachan upon the eist and north parts of the gate to be comontie to baith the saidis parties landis quhill they come to the proper merchis of Coule and Indboll—and all pasturages beest and benorth the saidis meithis of Rachan to be comon to baith the saidis parties except corne feild landis and hand (hained) feildis and gressings.” This old document is preserved at Dunrobin.’<sup>18</sup> Its references to the “litle townes and suburbs” about Dornoch, and the “litle hill and sheling callit Rachan,” as also its men-

tion of "the lands of Auchthoiche" are of great interest, and they help to locate two old place names that have now become obsolete. Mr H. M. Mackay in *Old Dornoch* directs attention to the fact that the "comon hie gate" that was made the boundary between Dornoch and the barony of Proncy was at that time "considerably further west than the present county road," and that the agreement dealt only with the marches on the north and west, as it was in that direction alone that the town lands touched those of Proncy and Skelbo. To the east and south of that barony lay the Church lands, "now belonging to the Earl, who had become also overlord of the town itself."<sup>19</sup>

The quiet of Dornoch was disturbed on a July evening in 1607 by an unseemly brawl that ended in tragedy. It has come to be known as the "Pape Riot" from the fact that three brothers of that name were involved in it. The oldest of them was Mr William Pape, who became schoolmaster at Dornoch in 1585, and its resident minister in 1588. In 1599 he was presented by King James to the Chantry of the diocese, and in 1606 he was appointed constant Moderator of the Presbytery. In 1607, with the consent of the bishop, dean and chapter, he leased to John, Earl of Sutherland, for life, and to his heirs for nineteen years (reserving his own liferent), the teind sheaves of the chanter's quarter, town and lands, all in the parish of Dornoch.<sup>20</sup> In course of time, as Sir Robert Gordon says, "by his vertue and diligence he became wealthie and of good accompt in the cuntrey

of Sutherland.” His brothers, Thomas and Charles, probably at his suggestion, and encouraged by his prosperity, came to Dornoch from Ross-shire and settled down beside their brother in Sutherland. Thomas became chancellor of the diocese and minister at Rogart. Charles was a notary public and messenger-at-arms, whose “affable and merrie conversation” gained him such popularity, according to Sir Robert Gordon, that he was appointed to the Sheriff-Clerkship of Sutherland. Fortune smiled upon them for a time, but their prosperity was short-lived. The old historian attributes their downfall to their pride of position and power, when he says:—“As wealth and prosperitie begets pryde, so doth pryde bring with it a certane contemp of others. These brethren dwelling for the most part in Dornogh, being both provident and wealthie, thought by progresse of tyme to purchase and buy the most pairt of the tenements of that toun, and dryve the auncient and natural inhabitants from their possessions.”<sup>21</sup> The smouldering resentment of “the auncient and natural inhabitants” might never have burst into flame, and the Papes might have gone on prospering and acquiring, but for a combination of untoward circumstances that brought them disaster. The Earl of Caithness had assembled a large body of his men on the borders of Sutherland, ostensibly for the purpose of hunting on Ben Griam; but the Earl of Sutherland, suspecting a design to invade his territory, gathered all his available men on the heights of Kildonan prepared, if need be, to bar the entry of the Caithness force into Suther-



land. The men from that county mustered in such numbers that the Earl of Caithness deemed it prudent to retire; but for a time the Earl of Sutherland kept his force there on guard. A few Dornoch men who had delayed their departure for the hosting, and had imbibed too freely on the eve of their departure, came into collision with the Papes in an inn where they were having breakfast. There was a quarrel, which led to a fight in the churchyard later in the day, ending in the wounding of two of the brothers and the death of the third.

Sir Robert Gordon's account of the tragedy is so graphic that it deserves to be quoted at length. He describes it in great detail as follows:—

“ Everie man being departed from the toun of Dornogh vnto this convention at Strathully, the yeir of God 1607, except William Morray, a boyer, and some few others, who were also readie to goe away the nixt morning, Mr William and Thomas Paips, with some others of the ministrie, had a meitting at Dornogh, concerning some of the church effairs. After they had dissolved their meitting, they went to breakfast to ane inn, or victualling-hous of the toun. As they were at breakfast, one John Mackphaill entered the house, and asked some drink for his money, which the mistres of the house refused to give him, therby to be red of his company, becaus shee knew him to be a brawling fellow. John Mackphaill taking this refusall in evill pairt, reproved the woman, and spok somewhat stubbornlie to the ministers, who began to excuse her; wherevpon Thomas Pape did threatin

him, and he agane did thrust into Thomas his arme ane arrow, with a broad forked head, which then he held in his hand. So, being parted and set asunder that tyme, Mr William and his brother Thomas came the same evening into the church-yaird, with their swords about them, which John Mackphaill perceaving, and taking it as a provocation, he went with all diligence and acquainted his nepheu Houcheon Mackphaill, and his brother-in-law William Morray, the boyer, therewith; who, being glaid to find this occasion whereby to revenge ther old grudge against these brethren, they hastned furth, and meitting with them in the churchyaird, they fell a quarrelling, and from quarrelling to feighting. Charles Pape hade bene all that day abroad, and at his returne, vnderstanding in what case his brethren were, he came in a preposterous hast to the fatall place of his end and rwyne. They fought a litle whyle; in end, Charles hurt William Morray in the face, and therevpon William Morray killed him. Mr William and Thomas were both extremlie wounded by John Mackphaill and his nepheu Houcheon, and were lying there for deid persons, without hope of recoverie; but they recovered afterward beyond expectation. The offenders escaped, becaus their wes none in the toun to apprehend them (except such as favored them), the inhabitants being all gone to the assemblie at Strathvllie. John Mackphaill, and his nephiu Houcheon, have both since ended their dayes in Holland. William Morray yet lives (reserved, as should seim) to a greater judgement. Mr William Paip, and his

brother Thomas, therevpon left the cuntrey of Southerland, and setled themselves in Rosse, wher Thomas now duelleth. Mr William died in the toun of Nugg, where he was planted minister. Thus did these brethren begin and end in this cuntrey; which I have declared at lenth, to shew us thereby, that man in full prosperitie should nevir think too much of himself, nor contemn others, vpon whom it hath not pleased God to bestow such measur of gifts and benefitts.”<sup>22</sup>

The historian evidently shared the general prejudice against the Papes, though, as has already been noted, the minister of Dornoch was his first teacher. Mr William Pape must have retained his office as minister of Dornoch for at least three years after the churchyard tragedy, as in a charter, dated Tain, 15th November, 1610, “Mr William Pape, minister at Dornoch, with consent of Cristine Monypenny his spouse, formaly made over to Mr John Gray, Dean of Caithness, his heirs male and assignees whatsoever, irredeemably lie Deane of Caithnes manse and croft (near the archdeacon’s manse) in the city of Dornoch.” The charter was ratified by the King at Edinburgh on 24th May, 1648.<sup>23</sup> An old stone bearing a coat of arms and the initials M. W. P. and C. M. was taken, many years ago, from the debris of an old house in Dornoch and deposited for safety in the Dunrobin Museum, where it now lies. The initials are, in all probability, those of Mr William Pape and Cristine Monypenny, whose adornment of their dwelling—possibly the old deanery—with armorial

bearings may have been regarded by the “auncient and natural inhabitants” of Dornoch as an assumption of aristocracy and superiority which they warmly resented.

The fugitives were “put to the horn” on October 1st, 1608, and in June of the following year four burgesses had to find caution not to reset the murderers, viz., John Dempster, Thomas Weir, Robert Weir, and William Murray. Among the commissions granted by the Privy Council between 1607 and 1616 is one to this effect:—“William Murray, bower in Dornoch, Hutcheon MacPhaill, brother of the late Thomas MacPhaill, citizen in Dornoch, Johne MacPhaill, son natural of said Thomas, and Alexander Poilsone, his servant, remaining as yet unrelaxed from a horning of 1st October last, at the instance of Margaret Gordoun, relict, Gilbert Pape, son, Barbara Pape, daughter, Mr William Pape, minister at Dornoch, and Thomas Pape, minister at Kilmalie, brothers of the late Charlis Pape, portioner of Mekle Reny, for not finding caution to answer on 2nd December next before the justice for the wounding of the said ministers, and for murdering the said Charlis,” a commission is given to George, Earl of Caithness, John, Earl of Sutherland, and others “to apprehend the said rebels, put them to the knowledge of an assize, and administer justice on them accordingly.”<sup>24</sup>

Reference has been made to the appointment in 1606 of Mr William Pape as “constant moderator” of the Presbytery. This office was instituted by King



*Photo. by J. Dixon*

THE PAIP STONE





James to ensure that in the absence of the bishop there should be some one who had the right to preside over the meetings of that court. The Privy Council, in June, 1607, appointed commissioners to see that appointments were made to this office, the need for which arose from the nominal connection that many bishops, at that time, had with their dioceses. They were content to draw the revenues of their bishoprics, which they hardly ever visited. Their gross dereliction of duty was, no doubt, largely responsible for the deplorable condition of religion in many parts of the country. A report was presented to the General Assembly in 1608 by a deputation appointed to visit certain districts, which stated that they " fand many kirkis wanting persones (parsons), to witt, fitt pastoris, togider with great disorderis, especially in Cathnes and Sudderland." In many churches in the north counties the Holy Communion, according to another report, had never been celebrated. That such a state of matters should have existed nearly half a century after the Reformation proves the tenacity with which the inhabitants of those districts adhered to their old faith. In this they were encouraged by the example of their overlords.

The Earl of Sutherland was still suspected of being a Catholic at heart, and in 1614 he was "warded at St. Andrews" after a respite of several months allowed him by the King on account of the state of his private affairs and the storminess of the weather. From St. Andrews he was transferred to Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh, where his youngest daughter was

born, and where she died in infancy. During his stay in Edinburgh the Earl “haunted the preachingis daylie as occasione offred”; so he informed his brother, Sir Robert, in a letter in which he begs him to let the King know this, and inform him of his intention “to haunt the church at home,” should he be allowed to return there. In his exile his heart yearned for his castle in Dornoch, and in a letter to his brother of date May 22nd, 1615, he says:—“But now ye mon ather deall with the King for my stay at home, and that so long as I haunt the church and dwelleth in Dornach, or ellis I wilbe bot ane wraked man; for my last being in the south hath done me great harme. . . . Macky and I dwelleth this winter in Dornach, if I get liue to stay at home. The haill gentilmen of the contrey will dwell their also, so betyme we think to mak the toun better.” In a post-script he adds:—“I will intreat yow to send me ane pair of the fynest dowle virginallis ye can get for money, seeing ye know I can not want the lyik out of my hous in Dornach. I lippin ye will not fail to do this, as ye wald haue me cairful to do your turnes heirafter, seing my bearnis ar learning to play and sing. Luik that ye caus sum skilfull weall thame, and to send thame in sum suir crear that cums to Scotland.” In the same letter he writes:—“Such an yeir was never sein with us. Many will parish in thir contreys through famine and neuir more lay land for falt of seid.”<sup>25</sup> He refers to the winter of 1614, which was one of exceptional severity, as Sir Robert Gordon records in the sentence which follows:—

“ During the winter season, the yeir of God 1614, ther fell out great abundance of snow (more than ordinarie) throughout all Scotland, which stormes continued all the spring evin vntill the moneth of May nixt ensueing, wherby the most pairt of all the hors, nolt, and sheip of the kingdome did perish; bot cheiflie in the north.”<sup>26</sup> There must have been terrible and widespread suffering in Sutherland, which the Earl could do little to relieve, owing to his heavy expenditure at St. Andrews and Edinburgh, and a diminished income through the failure of the crops. In one of his letters from Edinburgh at this time he expresses his regret that his absence from home and the extra expense it entailed had hindered the carrying out of much good work at home upon which he had set his heart, including the repair of the cathedral church at Dornoch. “ If I had stayed at home,” he writes, “ the church of Dornoch haid bene weill repaired or now, and monie good turnes done that never wilbe done in my absens.” He was allowed to return home in March, 1615, after he had bound himself “ wnder paine of fyve thousand markis ather to subscriue and swear, or ellis to entir in waird again at Mertimas nixt.” Ere Martinmas came he had passed away. He was seized with a “ bloodie flux and dissentrie ” at Dunrobin, and was conveyed to Dornoch, where he died on 11th September, 1615, at the early age of thirty-nine.

A letter he had written to his brother, Sir Robert, from Edinburgh in February, 1615, contains this reference to witchcraft in Sutherland:—“ I haue

presentlie resaued ane letter from Mr Jhon Gray out of Southerland making mention of the abuses of witchcraft in that contrey, quhilk they haue tryed laitie in Dornoch. Theirfoir I beseik yow, brother, sie if ye can get ane commission from His Majesty to put ane number of witches to ane assise. Ather this iniquitie must be tane order with, or ellis honest peopill cannot liue in that cuntrey.'"<sup>27</sup> There is no record as to what, if anything, was done to extirpate the evil of which Mr John Gray complained, though it may be assumed that Sir Robert's great influence at Court would secure the Earl the commission he wanted.

The Countess-Dowager of Sutherland, Sir Robert Gordon's mother, though a loyal Catholic, appears to have taken a keen interest in the appointment of a successor to Bishop Forbes. This appears in a letter she wrote to her son on 24th September, 1616, where she says:—"I pat your brothir's son to Mr Jhone Gray to lerne sum mair vertes nor he culd sie athir vitht hir or me. I vas aduertesit that scho myndit to haue sent him to hir fathir, and their eftir to haue purchast your gud vill. . . . Ve heir that our bischop is to be maid bischop of Abirden. Gif sua be, ye haue caus to taik attendance that ane onfriend cum not in this cuntray, for gif thai do, it sal be na small hurt to your brotheris hous. Friendis hes travailit with Mr Jhone Gray, quha is varay sueir to acsep sic offece, albeit it var in his ofir, for he thinkis that vitht suir contience he can not taik that offece, seing that leving is not abill to plant the kirkis. Thairfor gif his Maiestie vald taik sic ordour vitht Chatnes that the

bischopis landis thair mycht be restorit to the kirk, I think freindis suld moue Mr Jhone to acep of it. Othirvayis gif his Hines vald alov the thovsand pundis pentioun this bischop of Chatnes hes to the nyxt and that to be liftid out of the erildome of Ross (the silvir to be convertit in vittual) Mr Jhone vald be presit to deill thairfor. Withtout ane of this twa na honest man vill tak it, and ane cum thair that sekis it rather for gain nor gud contience. Remember that I aduerteis yow that your houss vill repent it for sic reasouns as I vill not vreit.”<sup>28</sup> The old lady had a mind of her own, and liked to have her own way, as one might expect of so strong and forceful a personality. She was not on good terms with her daughter-in-law, and did not want that lady to have the guardianship of her boy, who had succeeded his father in the earldom at the age of six. She was also anxious to remove any suspicion of his being reared in the old faith to which she herself adhered by committing him to the care of the first Protestant Dean of Caithness. That this was her motive, though she does not give it in her letter to Sir Robert, is clear from one he received from George Gray of Swordale, who wrote thus:—“My lord is oftest with Mr Jhone, my brother, for my ladie thocht fit to haue him in Mr Jhonis company for fear the archbischope suspect his educatioun with hir.” In the same letter, written at Skibo on 21st September, 1616, he says:—“Itt salbe weill doun that yowir worschipe haue ane cair of this mater seing for my awin part I will do as the rest of the gentillmen of the parrochin will do for satling with ane resident minister,

quhilk of conscience we are mowit to do. . . . My ladie, the schiref, and McKy is maist willing, gif the moyen mycht be haid, to gett Mr Jhone Gray to the bishoipric of Caitnes.’’<sup>29</sup>

Mr John Gray, to whom reference is made in these letters, was the son of Gilbert Gray of Swordale and a grandson of the John Gray who was custodier of Skibo Castle during Bishop Robert Stewart’s episcopate, and to whom Skibo Castle and the adjoining lands were granted in feu by the Earl of Sutherland. In 1608 he was presented by King James VI to the deanery of Caithness, which had become vacant by the resignation of Gavin Borthwick. In 1610 he leased to the Master of Sutherland the lands of the deanery, and that same year he confirmed the Earl in his possession of the manse and croft of the deanery, which Dean Hepburn had granted in 1562 to the Earl’s grandfather. Prior to his appointment to the deanery he had accompanied Sir Robert Gordon on a tour in the Continent, and the historian pays him the tribute of having been “a faithful Achates to him dureing all the tyme of his travells.” He also describes him as “a careful, godlie and vigilant pastor, who by his wholesome admonitions and good example, in walking religiouslie with ane unspotted conscience in his calling and conversation, hath much reformed the disordered and licentious livers of that cuntrey.”<sup>30</sup> Nothing had apparently been done to repair the damage done to the Cathedral by the burning of 1570, and its desolate condition moved the worthy Dean to use what influence he possessed to



persuade the Earl and others to repair the ruined fabric and make it available for worship. Nearly half a century had passed since the sound of prayer and praise had been heard within its walls, and the sight of these, blackened by fire and crumbling to ruin, must have saddened the heart of Dean Gray and fired him with the resolve to restore St. Gilbert's "broken kirk" to some measure of its former glory. That his efforts were not without success we gather from the following passage in Sir Robert's history:—"This yeir of God 1614 the reparation of the Cathedrall Church of the dyocie of Dornogh (a godlie and religious work) wes interprysed by the Earle of Southerland, and the gentlemen of that cuntrey, at the instigation and persuasion of Mr John Gray, Dean of Catteynes."<sup>31</sup> Though the repair was undertaken in 1614, that was a year of such poverty and want that the work was probably not begun for some time afterward.

Some of the charters belonging to this period are worth noting. Among them is one by which "Robert M<sup>c</sup>Phail, citizen of Dornoch, with the consent of Mariote Reid Neilson, his spouse, sold to Donald Makfaill, his son, and Eurie Murray, his future wyfe (lawful daughter of Angus Murray, citizen of Dornoch), in her pure virginity, the croft of land called Croft-mydok, in the east part of the city of Dornoch (between the hill of the cross called Gallowhill on the east, Lonereich on the north, and the burn on the south part of Dornoch flowing down from the west) in the country and county of Sutherland. To be held

by the said Donald and Eurie and the survivor of either and their legitimate heirs, whom failing by the said Donald, his heirs and assignees to whomsoever it might revert from the king in free burgage." The witnesses were Thos. Paip, minister of Rogart; John Murray, brother german of Angus Murray; Rob. Trunill, burgh officer of Dornoch; Charles Pape, notary public, on the ground of the said croft about the hour of 7 a.m., 12 July, 1594. The charter was confirmed by the King at Holyrood on 24th November, 1598.<sup>32</sup> The deed is so interesting that it is quoted at length. It is unusual in respect that it is granted in favour of an affianced couple, and probably fulfilled one of the conditions in their marriage contract which provided a home for them. Another uncommon feature is the information it conveys that the deed was attested on the croft in question at the hour of about 7 a.m., which suggests that business was transacted in Dornoch at an earlier hour in those days than it is to-day. The witnesses included two of the Pape brothers and the burgh officer, who bore a very uncommon name. The boundaries that define the croft show that Croftmadoch extended further to the west than it does now, if the burn was its western boundary. Of even greater interest is the designation of Gallowhill as the "hill of the cross" (*montem crucis*), which suggests that the gallows may have taken the form of a huge cross instead of being composed of two upright posts joined on the top by a cross beam, as was usually the case. Sir Robert Gordon records that two marauders of the Maciver clan were hung there in 1616.<sup>33</sup>

Another charter is that by which the King, on 19th December, 1595, assigned in feu form to Charles Paip in Dornoch, his heirs and assignees, the vacant tenement of land and the portion of land adjoining it in the town of Dornoch, between the sea, the common links, croft William Murray, burn of Dornoch, and the tenement and croft Tho. Fiddes, in the diocese of Caithness, which formerly were part of the temporality of the chapel of St. James within the college church of Dornoch (*infra ecclesiam collegiatam*).<sup>34</sup>

Two charters need not be quoted here as they are given in full at the end of this volume. One is the King's confirmation of a charter by which Alexander, Bishop of Caithness, ratifies all the charters of George Murray of Spanziedaill and his predecessors, and anew gives to George Murray and his heirs certain lands and tenements within the burgh of Dornoch. This deed is of special interest because it gives the names and locality of several small crofts in the immediate neighbourhood of Dornoch that have disappeared. The charter was drawn up at Letham on August 3rd, 1608, and was confirmed by the King at Edinburgh a few days later.<sup>35</sup> In the month following the King confirmed another charter of Bishop Alexander by which he disposed and quitclaimed to John, Earl of Sutherland, certain lands in Caithness and Sutherland, including Skibo Mains and pendicles, also the city and town of Dornoch with the houses, tofts, acres, "lie riggis, assyse aill et thole of the same" . . . the Bishop's moss and others situated in the said episcopate, the hereditary constablenesship of

Scrabster, Skibo and Dornoch, the bailieship of the bishop's lands, with authority to build "lie watter seu wound-mylnes at any part of the town of Dornoch or its burn." "Besides, because the said castles and palace are situated in a northern province where fierce men often prowl, where not only in time of war but also in time of peace they cannot be guarded without heavy expense," he grants to the said John the said offices with "lie portergopiness" that used to be paid to the janitor of Scrabster.<sup>36</sup> The noteworthy and interesting points in this charter are its reference to the construction of windmills in Dornoch at so early a period, the distinction it makes between the designation of the palace of Dornoch and the castles of Skibo and Scrabster, the latter being fortified and garrisoned while the former was not; the description it gives of the province in which they were situated, which re-echoes the complaint made by former bishops; and the curious term applied to the remuneration that was provided for the Earl.

The only charter among those examined that deals with Embo is one dated "At Leith, 15 Jan. 1608," by which Bishop Alexander assigns in feufarm to Issobelle Murray, widow of James McRaith of Ynbo and Robert McRaithe, his son and heir, two davachs of Ynbo. The grant was confirmed by the King at Edinburgh on 9th June, 1608.<sup>37</sup> The dates of these charters suggest that, for a great part of the year 1608, Bishop Alexander was resident in the south. It is doubtful, indeed, if he was much in his diocese before his consecration in

1611, which may account for the appointment in 1606 of Mr William Pape as "constant moderator" of the Presbytery.

The hopes of Dean Gray's friends were disappointed when, on December 7th, 1616, John Abernethy was appointed to the vacant bishopric. He was a member of an old Banffshire family, and was educated at Edinburgh University. In 1606 he was constant Moderator of the Presbytery of Jedburgh, but, as he had previously signed a protest against the introduction of Episcopacy, his Presbytery refused for a time to acknowledge his authority. In 1614 his health failed, and he had "liberty granted by the haill Presbytery to go to the baths for the recovery of his health." He appears to have retained his benefice in the Presbytery of Jedburgh after his promotion to the bishopric of Caithness. He resided in Jedburgh, and only paid biennial visits to his diocese. During these he must have stayed either at Skibo or at Scrabster, as the bishop's palace at Dornoch was from 1616 until 1622 the residence of the young Earl of Sutherland. His guardian, Sir Robert, before his departure for England, arranged for his education at the school of Dornoch, and gave Dean Gray the care of him. So he informs us in his history, where he writes:—"He left his nephue (the Earle) at the Schooll of Dornogh, and committed him to the care of Mr John Gray, dean of Catteynes and resident minister of that toun, of whose fidelity and diligence he wes most assured."<sup>38</sup> Two years previously the mother of the young nobleman had died

suddenly at Crakaig, at the early age of thirty-seven, “and wes bureid at Dornogh hard by her husband,” according to Sir Robert, who was appointed sole guardian to her children. The orphaned Earl’s studies were relieved by intervals of recreation, as we gather from his uncle’s tutory accounts which are preserved at Dunrobin. They contain several entries which afford some idea of the boy’s mode of life at Dornoch, *e.g.* :—

“Item, two chaldriers wictwall given at Dornoch crop 1617 for my lord and his pedagogue and servants boord.”

“Item, alewin poundis gewin this yeir 1618, for bows, arrowis, golff clubbes and balls, and other necessars for his lordship’s exercise.”

“Item, thriescoir sewentein poundis geivin this yeir, 1620, for my lord’s entertaynment with his pedagogue and his boy at Dornoghe, for mart, muttone, buttir, chiese, and talloue.”

“Item, fourtie four poundis giwen to one William Cumming this yeir for heiling and cureing my lord’s head, being diseased.”<sup>39</sup>

His indisposition must have been of some duration, as in 1618 a sum of £13 6s 8d was paid “to Neill Betone, phisitian, for coming to Sutherland to cure my lord, being diseased.” Then, in 1622, £40 was expended for the same end, in addition to three bolls of victual which were given to a woman who dressed the young Earl’s head. An entry of 1617 shows that a sum of £16 was paid for a saddle and horse furnish-



ings. In the summer of 1621 the young Earl paid a visit to Elgin, accompanied by his grandmother, brothers and sisters. In the following year he resigned Church lands in Dornoch and elsewhere, as also the constableness of Skibo Castle and the palace of Dornoch, to the Bishop of Caithness, according to a copy procuratory of resignation of date August 16th, 1622, which is in the Sutherland charter-room. After a period of study at Edinburgh he entered St. Andrew's University on the same day as the youth who afterwards became the famous Marquis of Montrose, with whom he formed a friendship. The young Earl continued his studies there until 1630, when he attained his majority and took up the management of his own affairs. For fifteen years these had been administered by his uncle and guardian, Sir Robert Gordon, whose own words may be quoted to show the good work he accomplished during his administration. "Sir Robert Gordoun," he writes, "haveing settled his effairs, and in some measure aggreid all the controversies which he then had, he indevoared nixt to reforme the disorders of the cuntrey, and to advance the reparation of the church of Dornogh; he held courts in all the corners of that province, wherby he settled all ther debates and controversies. Then he caused thatch and cover the church of Dornogh with sleat, which was found at that tyme in a quarrie hard by the toun of Dornogh, as it were by the speciall providence of Almightye God, for the advancement of that holie work, which Sir Robert now interprysed and studied to set forward

with his best indevoars, being vndertaken in his brother Earle John his tyme. The castell of Skibo. and the church of Dornogh wer the first buildings which wer covered with this new sleat. Sir Robert haveing set men a-work for the reparation of that church, he turnes his mynd then to the administration of justice in that countrey.”<sup>40</sup> His statement makes it clear that the repair of the cathedral, though it was undertaken in 1614, was not actually begun for at least two years later. Sir Robert doubtless felt it to be his duty to carry out the good work his brother had undertaken, and he would do it all the more readily from the affection he bore to Dornoch and its Cathedral.

The Cathedral was but partially repaired at this time; the choir and transepts were re-roofed, while the ruined nave was partitioned off and left to its fate. That the work must have made good progress may be gathered from an entry in Sir Robert's Tutor's Accounts to the effect that he paid “£73 6s 8d, the Earl's part off glassing the church of Dornogh and putting his armes in one of the glasses of the windows theroff.” This may be taken as an indication that the external repair of the church was completed by the year 1622, when the Tutor's Accounts end. Two additional entries may be quoted as of some interest. One is the payment of “six pounds, threttein shillings, four pennies” in 1621 “to Thomas Gordoune for killing of ane wolff and that according to the Acts of the countrey.” The other records the expenditure of “four pounds given for servants wages goeing to use



*Photo. by Mr Cooper, Glasgow*

THE CATHEDRAL FROM THE SOUTH-EAST



warnings at the parish churches at Peasche this year, 1619.”<sup>41</sup>

When, in May, 1621, Sir Robert Gordon returned from France to Scotland he found the county of Sutherland “and the whole diacie of Catteynes distracted with factions.” One controversy, which was the source of much strife and turmoil in the parish of Dornoch, was a dispute between Sutherland of Duffus and Gordon of Embo regarding the marches between Skelbo and Coul, which reached a climax in 1621. Sir Robert Gordon tells how the Laird of Duffus, “accompanied with his brother, James Southerland, and seaven others, sent for young Enbo, to conferr with him about these differs, which wer then amongst them. Enbo obeyes and comes alone. late in the evening, to the contraverted bounds, wher Duffus stayed for him. Efter some hote speeches on either syd, Duffus and his company invaded John Gordoun, and wounded him, befor he had the leasure to draw his suord; so they leave him, and he returnes to his house. The report heirop runes spedelie through the whole cuntrey; whervpon some of the Gordons and the Grayes, with certane of the Earle of Southerland’s tennents, came hastalie to the toun of Enbo; and disdaining that a Gordouns blood should be shed in Southerland after that maner, they run heidlong to the castell of Skelbo, wher the Laird of Duffus then wes; they ryd about the house, provocking him to com furth into the feilds. Thervpon aryved Sir Alexr. Gordoun, shirreff of Southerland, who presentlie appeased the tumult; and being assisted

by Mr John Gray, dean of Catteynes, he took assurance of both the pairties for keiping of the peace, vntill the coming of Sir Robert that he might tak suche order therwith as he should think expedient.”<sup>42</sup>

The Privy Council Register gives fuller details of the attack on Skelbo Castle, which was made on Sunday, June 10th, 1621. The Gordons were well equipped for the fray, being armed with “bowis, swordis, targes, lochquhaber axis, hagbutis and pistolettis.” They were ordered by Gordon of Embo to lie in wait without the Castle until Duffus should come forth. Embo sent out two scouts to reconnoitre, who made an assault upon one of the Castle servants as he came out to water his horse. They “brak at him with drawne swordis” and wounded him. To irritate Duffus and draw him out of his stronghold the Gordons “raide about his house and upoun his growand cornis the speace of tuo or thrie houris, schouting and crying to him to come furth gif he durst; and they maid mony provocationis to him to come furth with most outragious, disgraiceful and railling speecheis; and persaveing they could not trayne the said Williame out of his house, they send ane messenger unto him to tell him that upoun the mourne they sould come to his lands and mure of the Coull, and thair in despyte of him and al would do for him, they sould cast faill and divott and leade the same away.” They carried out their threat next day, when five hundred persons raided the moor and “keast and led away ane grite number of faill and divottis thairupoun.” Four years later the Gordons



appear to have made another plot to do injury to Sutherland of Duffus, and again to have chosen a Sunday for their evil designs upon him. The records of the Privy Council tell how they tried to waylay him as he returned home from Dornoch Kirk to which they supposed he had gone for worship. Twenty-two men, "all in armis with swordis, targeis, bowis, darlochis, and otheris waponis invasive, and with hacquebutts and pistolettis prohibite to be worn, having shaikin off all feare of God," lay in wait for Sutherland. To their disappointment and his advantage he did not happen to be at church that Sunday, so that their design was frustrated. "Thay then verie discontentlie reteirit thameselffis all hame with the said Johnne Gordoun." This incident occurred on March 7, 1625.

Mr H. M. Mackay in *Old Dornoch* quotes "a copy of a summons at the instance of the Earl and his Curator" which he found "among the town papers." It has reference, apparently, to the assault upon young Embo, which Sir Robert has so fully described, and is to this effect:—"Ye said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus, James Sutherland his brother, Wm. Sutherland in Coull, Alex. Sutherland in Pittentraill, John Murthesone in Eister Skelbo, Johnne Bruce, Johnne Grant, and Johnne Barclay, servitores to the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffes, came with convocation of o'r lieges in armes, to the number of fortie persones being all boddine in fear of wear with gunes, pistolattes and swordis and uteres waipenes invasive, ofensive, and defensive forbiddene to be worne or borne under

cloud and silence of nicht cam to the grund of ye lands of Emboll, pertaininge to Johne Gordne of Enbow, tennent vassal and servand to Or. said richt trest cuisgne, and thr. under trust drew out ye said Johne Gordne out of his hous of Emboll and thr mayst barboruslie shamfulie and creuelie envadit hurt and wounded the said Johne Gordon in several parts of his bodie to the effusione of his bloid in great quantitie.”<sup>43</sup> This quaint and interesting document paints in the darkest colours the outrage upon young Gordon, who could not have made his way home unaided, as Sir Robert gives us to understand that he did, had he been severely wounded.

In November, 1622, through the mediation of friends, the following agreement was made between the contending parties:—

“ Be it kend till all men be thir presentis that fforsamekill as in the moneth of June in the yeir of God Jm Vie twentie ane yeiris thair fell furthe betuix me Wm. Sutherland of Duffus and James Sutherland my brother and or complices one the ane pairt and Johne Gordoun elder of Enbo and John Gordoun younger appearand therof and Hew Gordon his brother and their complices on the uther pairt certain controversyes and clistis anent the richteous merchis and meithis that should devyde the lands of Coull barronies of Skelbo and Pronsie pertening heretable to the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus on the ane pairt and the landis of Enbo pertening heretable to the said Johne Gordoun elder of Enbo and John Gordoun younger his sone and air appearand thirof And that

we the saidis pairtis being maist willing that or saidis landis sould be devydit in propertie fra uthers in all tyme cuming and that na clistis be betuix us heirefter anent an allegit bluidsched committit be the saidis Wm. Sutherland of Duffus and James Sutherland his brother upon the saidis Johne Gordoun younger in the said moneth of June the yeir of God forsaid, And also anent the allegit Dinging and birsing of Alexr. Thomsoune servant to the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus be Johne Gordoun of Embo and Hew Gordoun his brother and their complices And we the saidis pairties being maist willing that the saidis clistis and controversies sould be tane away and that or saidis landis sould be devydit fra uthers in all tyme heirefter cuming (in propertie) are content and consentis that the saidis landis salbe devydit fra utheris as followis : That is to say Begyning at the north and that pairt callit Rachan quhilkis devydis the landis of Dornache at the south fra the landis of Pronsie at the west and Northwest and the landis of Skelbo at the eist and north eist" . . . . (Here follows a detailed definition of the marches marked by "kairnes") "and this undertaken the saidis pairties oblissis invioliebill for us or ouris successouris in all tyme heirefter cuming. And forsameikle as the merches meithis ar fullie aggreit upone be us pairties forsaidis wheranent any clystis proceeded betuix us befoir Theirfoir the said John Gordoun younger of Enbo and John Gordoun elder of Enbo my father for ourselfis and for our bairnes and complices reunes freelie and dischairges all rancour haitred and malice consavit be

us or utheris againes the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus and James Sutherland his brother and their complices for allegeit hurting and schedding of the said John Gordoun younger his blude in the moneth of June jmvie and twentie ane yeiris. Lykes I the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus for myself and takand the burding upon me for James Sutherland my brother and Alexr. Thomsoun my servand renunciies freelie all flychtis and rancour of hart consavit be us or ony of us againis the saidis John Gordoun elder and younger or aganis Hew Gordoun their brother and servants and their complices for allegeit dinging and bruising the said Alexr. Thomsoun my servand or for any uther deed or occasioun preceding the dait of thir presentis. And for farder satisfactioun to be maid be the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus to the saidis John Gordoun younger of Enbo for any consavit flyt consavit be the said John Gordoun younger againis me the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus and James Sutherland my brother or Wm. Sutherland in Coull or our complices I the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus bindis and oblissis me and my airis and executoris to content and pay to the said John Gordoun younger of Enbo his airis and executoris the soume of Four hundreth merks money of this realm and that betuix the day and dait of thir presentis and the twentie day of December nixt to cum And farder we the said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus and John Gordoun elder and younger of Enbo discharges simpliciter utheris of all actiouns of lawborrows and of all bondes and obligatiouns grantit be ayther of us to utheris preceeding the dait of thir presentis and forder we the

said Wm. Sutherland of Duffus and John Gordoun elder and younger of Enbo bindis and oblissis us hinc inde o utheris Tha nane of us sall rubill nor inquiet utheris in their landis bodyes gudis or geir bot keep trew and constant friendship to utheris in all tyme cuming heirefter as becumis Cristanes to do. And that under the pane of perjurie infamie tinsell of honor and credit and never to be reput as ane honest man at na tyme heirefter cuming. And attour that gif ane brek sall happin to fall out betuix us pairties at any tyme heirefter as God forbid in that event we bind and oblissis ilkane of us to utheris that the pairtie braker of this appointment sall content and pay to the keeper of this our appointment the sum of ane thousand poundis money of this realme by and attour to be estimat perjurit and infamous in all tyme coming."

It finally provides for registration in the Privy Council Records. It was signed at the march stones between Embo and Coul on 31st October, 1622, before several witnesses, including Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, George Munro of Tarrel, John Munro of Lemlair, and John Gray, minister of Dornoch.<sup>44</sup>

This was evidently not the only dispute in which Sutherland of Duffus was involved in those days. He had another controversy with the Earl of Sutherland regarding the teinds of Skelbo, Torboll, and Proncy. Sir Alexander Gordon, who acted on this occasion in the Earl's interests, gives expression, in a letter to Sir Robert Gordon, to his indignation at the possibility that the Earl "suld be outschot be his awin



wassall.” As sheriff he had arrested the crop growing on the lands of Proncy in security for the payment of the teinds. This arrestment Duffus obtained authority to remove, and immediately had all the barley cut and carried to his farm-yards. Sir Alexander’s feelings at being thus outwitted may be gauged from what he has to say regarding a course which, he writes, “I thoct werie hard and ane gryt lichtlie, nocht onlie to the Erll off Suthirland (quha is bot a barne) bot lykwayis to we quha hes ane cair off his adois for the tyme.” Having got together a number of men with horses and carts, he invaded the barn-yards of Duffus and carted away the quantity of grain needed for the payment of the teinds. Indignant at the poor response the Earl’s tenants had made to his request for assistance, he writes:—“I pray God the Erll of Sutherlandis guid turn be never lippinit viame in this cuntrey, for I think giwe they sawe his bake at the wall in ane gryt mater they wald stes thame selfis littill to relaiff him quhen they maid scrappill in sik ane trifill.”<sup>45</sup> The dispute was taken to the Court of Session, which decided in favour of the Earl of Sutherland, to whom the teinds were secured. The Laird of Duffus appears to have been the stormy petrel of the parish, and Skelbo the centre of turmoil and strife. This was mainly due to the unfriendly attitude the lairds of Skelbo had for long taken up towards the House of Sutherland, whose enemies they had aided and abetted. The peace that followed the agreement of 1622 was not a lasting one, for it did not dissipate the bad feeling that existed between the two families. It smouldered for a time,



and in 1625 it broke out again. That year John Gordon of Embo, still nursing his wrath against the Laird of Duffus and his family, met John Sutherland of Clyne, brother to Duffus, on the road between Cyderhall and Skibo, both on horseback and each attended by a friend. A fight ensued, which Sir Robert Gordon thus describes:—"John Gordon invaded the Laird of Clyne and first, haveing a cudgell in his hand, wherwith he gave him many blowes; then they drew their suords, and they, with their seconds, fell to it eagerly. Afrt they had foughten a whyle, John Gordoun wounded the Laird of Clyne in the head, and in the hand, and did mutilat him; yit suffered him to goe away with his lyff, although he had him in his will and reverence. The Laird of Duffus and all his friends and partakers, took this contempt highlie: not so much becaus his brother Clyne wes hurt, bot that he was battoned and cudgelled."<sup>46</sup> John Gordon was imprisoned in Edinburgh, and was only released on payment of a fine after Sir Robert had exercised his great influence on his behalf. Not till after the death of the Laird of Duffus were the families reconciled.

During a brief visit Bishop Abernethy paid to his diocese in August, 1623, he held a meeting of Synod at Dornoch, which Sir Robert Gordon attended and secured the acceptance by the Synod of a proposal he made for the benefit of the Cathedral. In his history he records his achievement:—"Sir Robert Gordoun wes present and chieff assister, who by his motion and earnest procurement, caused ane act of synod to be ther decreed, wherby, in all tyme coming,

everie master, parson, or vicar, within the dyacie of Catteynes, should contrIBUTE and pay ther first fruits (that is the first yeir's profite of ther benefice after ther entrie) to the reparation and maintenance of the cathedrall-church of the dyacie of Dornogh."<sup>47</sup> This does not necessarily imply that the partial repair he had initiated had not been completed, as it probably was, before 1622, when he made payment of the Earl's portion of the cost of glazing the windows of the church. It may be that the old historian had set his heart on rebuilding the ruined nave, and had adopted this method of instituting a fund for that purpose. The Bishop, who presided at the Synod, remained but five days in his diocese. That he only paid it periodic visits of short duration may have been due to its deplorable social and moral condition, and his oppressive treatment at the hands of the Earl of Caithness. Crime was rampant in the diocese, which was infested by bands of marauders who did not even respect the Bishop's property. Of the Earl of Caithness it is recorded in the Privy Council Register that "he hes thir diverse yeares bygane seased upon the Bishop of Cathnes his whole estate and living, without forme or ordour of law."<sup>48</sup> In 1623 the Archbishops of St. Andrews and Glasgow complain to the King of "the troubles made to the Bishope of Caithnes by the Earle of that countrey, who liveth subject to no law, and debarreth him of his rent and living, hath brought him to such necessitie that we are forced humbly to mean his estate to your Majestie."<sup>49</sup> In a letter he wrote to the King soon afterwards the Bishop set forth his complaint against the Earl, and begged for redress.

So strong and widespread was the sympathy evoked by his condition that Archbishop Law represented it to the King in these terms:—"The Earle of Caithnesse pretending to have right, and being in possession of the most and best part of the land and tithes of the said Bishoprick, that he may hardlye maintane his privat estate, much lesse be able to serve your maiestie, and attend his Diocesse in that dignity and place to which your maiestie hath graciouslye preferred him."<sup>50</sup> It is not to be wondered at that, such being the deplorable condition of affairs in his diocese, Bishop Abernethy chose to make Jedburgh his home, and that five years passed before he paid another visit to his sphere of duty in the wilds of Sutherland and Caithness.



SEAL OF THE CHAPTER OF CAITHNESS

*CHAPTER VI*THE RESTORATION AND REVOLUTION  
PERIOD

THE period now under review was one of much importance in the civil and ecclesiastical history of this country; during it the struggle between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism continued, and became largely a contest between King and people for supremacy in matters of religion. James VI was obsessed by the idea of the Divine Right of Kings, his ambition to secure uniformity in religion throughout his kingdom as an essential condition of absolute monarchy, and by his conviction that Episcopacy was the form of church government which best suited his purpose. Changes in church polity did not cause his Scottish subjects much concern, but his attempt to impose his own ideas of church worship upon them created widespread indignation and revolt. The ritual of the Scotch Episcopal Church at that time was of a less ornate type than that of the Church of England. Sacerdotal vestments, choral singing and organs had no place in the service of the Scottish Church, whose mode of worship was much the same whether Episcopacy or Presbyterianism was in the ascendant. It had a liturgy of its own, for Knox's "Book of Common Order" had been in use since the Reformation. While the people of Scotland had

no objection to a liturgy, they strongly resented the effort James VI made and his successor, Charles I, repeated, to enforce their acceptance of the Anglican liturgy, which they regarded with suspicion as savouring of Romanism. It was the fear of Romanism that inspired their dogged and determined opposition to the despotic policy of the monarchs, which defeated its own ends and led to disaster. The firm resolution of all sections of the Scottish people to defend their civil and religious liberties manifested itself in the memorable scene in Greyfriars Churchyard on 28th February, 1638, when noblemen, barons, clergy and burghesses signed the National Covenant. The author of *The Fifty Years' Struggle*, describing the scene, tells how the solemn pause that followed the reading of the Covenant "was broken when the Earl of Sutherland, advancing deeply affected, affixed the first signature to the National Covenant." Then came the Glasgow Assembly of that same year, which has been called the "Second Reformation"; the Assembly of 1639, which condemned the Book of Canons and the Service Book, declared Episcopal government unlawful, and revived Presbyterianism; soon thereafter followed the Westminster Assembly, which compiled the Westminster Confession of Faith. Meantime the Civil War had broken out in England, ending in the defeat and execution of the King, and followed by the exile of his successor; then came the period of the Commonwealth, during which, under the stern rule of Cromwell, the country was governed wisely and well.

The restoration of Charles II in 1660 was hailed in Scotland as the recovery of its national independence and the dawn of a new era of peace and prosperity; but disillusionment soon followed, and the Covenanters had to fight and to suffer untold hardships and cruelties for the faith they cherished. The accession to the throne of James VII, on the death of his brother in 1685, intensified the persecution of the Covenanters, and the first year of his reign was known as "the black year" or the "killing time." With a Catholic King on the throne, and the highest offices in the kingdom bestowed upon Catholics, the danger Scotland most feared became more imminent, but in 1689 came the Revolution, which averted the danger by the overthrow of the reigning monarch and the substitution of a Protestant King. This great national upheaval was the product of religion rather than politics; its main cause was dread of the return and triumph of Romanism. The Revolution dispelled that fear and ensured the final establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland.

Only distant mutterings of the storm that raged in the Lowlands could have reached the remote diocese of Caithness, where it was little felt. Occupied with their own affairs, and more concerned, probably, with the factions and feuds within their own borders, the parishioners of Dornoch viewed from afar the stirring events that convulsed the south country, their attitude in the contest between the throne and the people being largely determined by the fact that the Earl of Sutherland was such a strong



supporter of the Covenant. Though his brother, George, appears to have served in the army of the Covenant, there is no indication in the Sutherland records of that eventful time that the Earl did more than lend the whole weight of his high position and great influence to the defence of his country's spiritual independence. This brief and imperfect survey of the period covered by this chapter may help to set in their true perspective the local events it records.

Bishop Abernethy paid another visit to his diocese in 1628, and appears on that occasion to have stayed at Skibo. This information is contained in a letter written by Sir Alexander Gordon of Navidale to his brother, Sir Robert, dated 21st July, 1628, in which he refers to the prospective erection of Dornoch into a royal burgh, and the fixing by the Bishop of the dates for its fairs. "As concerning the bissines of Dornoch," he writes, "immediatlie after the resett of your last letter I wryt for the goodeman of Skibo and his brother, Mr Jhone, for young Inebo and the comissar, to quhom I impartit the bissines uppoun thair aithis of secrecie, quha all war werie glaid thairoff. And efter adwyssment I have wryttin sowthe to Alexander Lintoun with our bischop (quha was in Skibo uppoun his returning hame sex dayis sens) and has confeirit our mercat dayis with the rest of marcat fairis in this north partis, and hes accord- inglie appointit the first marcat to be the twentie day of Juni, being St. Margrat's day, and the nixt the twentie day of Agust, being St. Bernardis day, quhilkis ar befoir and efter Tainis marcatt, and the

most commodious tymes for ws in the yeir, except Barsday, quhilk is the third and our ordinar marcat; and the olkie mercat to be on Satterday. The goode-man of Skibo and Mr Jhon did communicat that mater to our bischope, quha hes promisit to be bothe secreit thairin, as also ane forderer thairoff, and withall hes admonischit ws of ane thing quhairoff ye sall be war, to wit, that the said brughe be not subiect to taxations or commissioners for the space of sewin yeris wntill it hawe sum begining of abilitie; quhilk I hoip ye will get suspendit for the said space in respect of the Earllis minoritie, and sik wther reasonabill cawsis as ye think fitt.”<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert had evidently acquainted his brother with the success that had crowned his efforts to secure for Dornoch the dignity of a royal burgh, which King Charles I had conferred by a charter dated 14th July, 1628. The letter shows the gratification with which the news had been received by the favoured few to whom it was communicated in confidence until the official announcement should be made. But the thought of the burdens the dignity might possibly impose upon the small and impoverished community caused the bishop some disquiet. Any such disadvantage, however, was counterbalanced by the greatness of the honour paid by the King to so remote a corner of his dominions and the privileges it conferred. Sir Robert in his history thus modestly refers to his great achievement:—“In the moneth of Julie, the yeir of God 1628, Sir Robert Gordon procured from his Ma’tie at London the privilege of a burgh-royall to the toun of Dornogh in Sutherland,

with divers privileges conteaned in that gift; which Sir Robert sent home into Scotland to passe vnder the greate seale.'''<sup>2</sup>

Sir Robert must have made to the King a strong representation of Dornoch's claims to the distinction he craved for it, as the grounds given in the royal charter for its erection into a royal burgh are, among others, that Dornoch was the only city of the earldom and county of Sutherland to which, beyond the memory of man, the inhabitants of that country resorted as to a common emporium in order to purchase the necessaries of life; that, owing to its situation near the seashore, it had a suitable site for the construction of a harbour for the importation and exportation of merchandise; that it was highly expedient that it should be erected into a free royal burgh for the use of his subjects in that part of his kingdom, and that, as they were for the most part barbarous and uncultivated mountaineers, it might be of great advantage in reducing them to a state of civilisation; further, that the county and earldom of Sutherland was of such extent that it had much need of a free burgh within its bounds. His Majesty accordingly erected the burgh and city of Dornoch with all its lands, tenements, houses, buildings, roods and "outsettis," together with the port and harbour of the same, into a free royal burgh and port, reserving to the Earl of Sutherland, his heirs male and successors, their hereditary right over the said lands and other outsetts within the said burgh. Power was given to the community to elect a Provost, four

Bailies, a Dean of Guild, a Treasurer, and twelve Councillors, who were given authority to elect Commissioners to Parliament. The Town Council was invested with full power to make laws for the government of the burgh, also to create burgesses and brothers of guild with such privileges and liberties as pertain thereto in other royal burghs. The provost and bailies were appointed justiciaries of the peace, with power to appoint constables and all other members and officials of court, and to them were assigned all escheats, blood-monies, fines and amercements of the courts for the common good of the said burgh. The magistrates were also empowered to erect a market cross and a tolbooth or prison within the burgh, and to hold a weekly market on Saturday, and three annual fairs, each for the space of three days, on twentieth July, twentieth August, and tenth October, with all the small customs of these fairs. They were likewise invested with full power to erect the harbour and port of Dornoch with supports and bulwarks "lie schoir et peir," and to levy the petty customs of the same, with anchorages, "lie dock-maill," and other privileges. For this the Town Council and community were to make an annual payment to the King of forty shillings as burgh cess, with service of the burgh according to use and wont.

In a note upon this charter, which he gives in full in his *Ancient Tolbooths of Dornoch*, Mr H. M. Mackay draws attention to the fact that the charter "gives no boundaries of the territory thus erected." The marches between the burgh and the adjoining

lands had been ‘‘ sighted ’’ in 1606, and the municipal boundary of to-day is practically as it was then defined. He also emphasises the effect of this charter on the superiority of Dornoch, which it transferred from the Earls of Sutherland to the Crown, and he further points out that Dornoch had its market cross and its tolbooth before it became a royal burgh. Its fairs had also been in existence prior to that date, and, according to Sir Robert Gordon, there were four of them held in the burgh, as we gather from the following passage in his history :—‘‘ In the toun of Dornogh ther ar four fairs kept yeirlie : Sanct Gilbert his fair, Sanct Barr his fair, Sanct Margaret her fair, and St. Bernard’s fayre, vnto the which ther resorteth a great confluence of people to traffique, from all the pairts of the kingdome. St. Gilbert his fayre is kept yeirlie, the first day of Aprile, St. Margaret’s fayre is kept yeirlie, the tuentie daye of Julie, St. Bernard his fair is kept yeirlie, the tuentie daye of August, and St. Barr his fayre wes kept in former tymes the tuentie-fyfth day of September; bot Alex. Erle of Sutherland procured it to be transferred and removed from the 25th of September to the tenth day of October. Everie one of these fairs continues for the space of thrie dayes. Ther is also a great fair kept yeirlie at Golspikirketoun, besyd Dunrobin, the last day of November, called Sanct Andrew his fayre.’’<sup>3</sup> Navidale’s letter, already quoted, makes no reference to St. Gilbert’s fair, which by that time may have been discontinued. The other three, as also the weekly market on Saturday, are mentioned as having

been appointed by the bishop. St. Barr's fair, the date of which had been altered in 1592 by the Earl of Sutherland from 25th September to 10th October, "because the corn standing stoukit was destroyed by the guidis repairing to it," was again changed by an Act of Parliament in 1641 from October 10 to October 22, and its name was to be altered to St. Gilbert's Fair. The following quotation from the Act shows that the change was made out of regard for the safety of the crops that were still in the fields at that season. It is entitled "Ane Act in favour of the burghie of Dornoch anente the change of there faire," and gives as the reason for it, "because ye said fair whilk is appoynted to be holdine at ye said burghie upoun ye said tenth day of October yearly is hurtfull and verie prejudiciall to ye said burgh and neighbouries adjacent therabout be eiting and distroying ther cornes then being upon ye ground and not usuallie woone nor led at ye tyme therof"; it annuls the said fair and "appents ane new fair to be held on 22nd October and continue for three days to be callit St. Gilbert fair."<sup>4</sup> The Act was effective as regards the change of date, but not so in its attempt to alter the name of the fair, which has always been associated with St. Barr, and has outlasted all the others. Another fair was added to the number held in the burgh when, in 1647, an agreement was made between the burgh and the Earl of Sutherland "by which the fair called Andermas market, formerly held at Golspie, was to be held at Dornoch, and all other markets within the Earldom were to be held in future at Dornoch, and the customs



uplifted for the benefit of the burgh.’’<sup>5</sup> Mr H. M. Mackay was of the opinion that St. Andrew’s Fair was held in December, and that there was another in January, known as St. Callan’s Fair. Those already mentioned, along with the Wemyss’ Fair instituted in 1739, bring the number of markets annually held in Dornoch up to seven, which must have afforded the inhabitants of the burgh in olden days much entertainment and profit.

Through the good offices of Sir Robert Gordon, Dornoch was further honoured in 1631 by being made the head burgh of the new Sheriffdom of Sutherland. The diocese of Caithness had formerly been included in the Sheriffdom of Inverness, which was of too great extent for the proper dispensation of justice in its remotest parts. To remedy the situation an Act of Parliament had been passed in 1503, during the reign of James IV, decreeing that the Sheriff having jurisdiction of all the diocese of Caithness “sall sit to Justice in Dornok and Wik.” The reason assigned for such an arrangement was “becaus thair hes bene greit lak and falt of Justice in the north partis as Cathnes and Ros for falt of diuision of the Shrefdome of Inuernes quhilk Is oure greit and thai partis ar sa fer distant fra the said burght of Inuernes throw the quhilk thai may nocht be brocht haistely thairto without greit expensis laubouris and travellis quhairthrou greit enormytie and trespass hes growin in thai partis in defalt of officeris within thame self that had power to put gude reule among the pepill.” This, however, was not enough to solve the problem, and on the day

following his coronation at Holyrood on 17th June, 1633, King Charles held a Parliament at Edinburgh, where "dyvers Acts were made for the weill of the Kingdome. At this Parliament there was ane Act made by Sir Robert Gordon his procurement for dismembring the Shiriffdome of Southerland from the Shiriffdome of Inorness, and for making Southerland a Shiriffdome be itself."<sup>6</sup>

The death of Sir Robert Gordon's mother, Jean Gordon, Countess of Sutherland, occurred in May, 1629, and she was buried in Dornoch Cathedral in accordance with her own wish. She died at the advanced age of eighty-four, and her son pays her the tribute of having been "a vertuous and comlie lady, judicious, of excellent memorie, and of great understanding above the capacitie of her sex."<sup>7</sup> To the end of her long life she adhered to her early faith, though she had to endure much for her loyalty. She expressed a wish to be buried according to the rites of the Church of Rome; but it is extremely doubtful if her son, Sir Robert, who was a strong Protestant, was able to carry out her behest. His brother, Sir Alexander Gordon of Navidale, shared his mother's faith, and on account of his religion he determined to remove to Ireland and dispose of his property in Sutherland, which he offered to his nephew, the Earl. In a letter to Sir Robert Gordon he complains that the Earl had not been generous in his dealings with him. Achindean appears to have been one of his properties in Dornoch.

Soon after the attainment of his majority the Earl of Sutherland married, and, after residing for a time

in Edinburgh, he made Dornoch Castle his home, and there his only daughter, Lady Jean Gordon, was born on 10th October, 1634. There, too, his oldest son, John, Lord Strathnaver, died of smallpox on 14th October, 1637, when only five years old. The Earl took an active part in the opposition offered to the new service-book imposed by the King, the use of which in St. Giles on 23rd July, 1637, gave rise to a storm of protest, in which Jenny Geddes is said to have taken a leading part. To give his support to the movement against Laud's liturgy the Earl went to Edinburgh, where his Countess died on 29th December, 1637, little more than two months after the loss of her oldest boy. Her husband must have stayed on in Edinburgh for a time, as he was among the first, if not the first, to sign the National Covenant in Greyfriars' Churchyard on 28th February, 1638. He spent the whole of 1640 in Sutherland, as his correspondence with his agent in Edinburgh shows. The King wrote him in June, 1634, possibly at the instigation of Sir Robert Gordon, a letter in which he urges the completion of the restoration of the Cathedral, which had been partially repaired. The nave was still in ruins, and one can understand how Sir Robert, who had begun the work of restoration, must have greatly desired to see it completed during his life-time. The royal letter is one of the treasures of the Dunrobin charter-room, and reads thus :—

“ Right Trustie and welbeloued cousin, wee greete yow well : Whereas wee are informed that of late a beginning was made in reparing the cathedrall church

of the diocie of Caitnesse, wherein wee do commend the endeauours of such as did contribute to that purpose; but hearing that the bodie of that church is as yet to sett vp, which will require the assistance of the most able and eminent persones in that diocie, wee haue hereby thought fitt speciallie to recommend vnto yow to assist so pious a work by vsing the aduise and direction herein of the reuerend father in God, the bishop of Caithnesse, and by helping to make vp such a generall contribution amongst all the inhabitants of that diocie as wilbe sufficient to finish that work, wherein as yow will show a zeale to Gods seruice so wee will tak it in verry good pairt at your handes. Wee bid yow fairewell from our manour of Greenwich the 22 of June 1634.”

“To our right trustie and welbeloued cousin, the Earle of Southerland.”<sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding the King's intervention, the nave was allowed to remain as the burning of 1570 had left it. Its restoration was doubtless too serious an undertaking for the Earl to face alone, as the royal letter suggests, and assistance from other “able and eminent persones” in the diocese may not have been forthcoming. In 1641 another provision was made for the repair and upkeep of the Cathedral by “Ane Act of Ratification in favour of Alexander Munro, minister of Dornoch, whereby 800 marks yearly or 8 chalders of victual out of the rents of the bishopric of Caithness were to be given him, of which sum he was to pay 200 marks yearly to the master of the grammar school, and 300 for the repairing and upholding of









the kirk. This reference to the grammar school suggests that in Dornoch, at that early date, education was not neglected.

A terrible famine seems to have prevailed in 1634 throughout the north of Scotland, due to the tempestuous weather of the previous year, which had ruined the crops. A great scarcity of fish added to the distress of the people, who, in order to satisfy the cravings of hunger, are said to have "killed their very dogs and ate them, and greedily devoured seaweare or whatever would support life." The bishops of Orkney and Caithness made an earnest appeal to the Government for assistance, which was ultimately rendered.

At the Glasgow Assembly of 1638, at which George Gordon, brother of the Earl of Sutherland, was the representative elder from the Presbytery of Sutherland, the whole fabric of Episcopacy was demolished and Presbyterianism was restored. The Five Articles of the Perth Assembly and the service-book were condemned; the bishops were all deposed, and eight of them were excommunicated. Bishop Abernethy, according to Sir Robert Gordon's history, renounced his bishopric, and so escaped excommunication. He did not long survive his deposition, for in the following year he died at the age of seventy-two. He was a man of considerable learning and evangelical fervour. He had a rather quaint and attractive style of writing, and was the author of two works, entitled "A Christian and Heavenly Treatise, containing Physicke

for the Soule," and "The Dignity and Duty of a Christian," which were rather popular in their day. He was twice married, and by his first wife had two sons and five daughters. Dr Robert Hamilton, minister of Glasfurd, a theologian of advanced views, and an ardent advocate of Episcopacy, was nominated to the bishopric in succession to Abernethy, as a reward for the signal services he had rendered the cause. It is said of him that "he swore that he would keep the Service Booke in his church, and use it in despyte of puritans and the devill." He was deposed before his consecration, and retired to England, where he spent the rest of his days.

The Act passed by the General Assembly of 1638 was confirmed in 1639 by Parliament, at which the Laird of Pulrossie represented the sheriffdom of Sutherland, while Walter Murray, Pitgrudie, and Robert Gordon, Brora, were the commissioners for the burgh of Dornoch. Murray of Pitgrudie again represented Dornoch in the Parliament of 1641, and afterwards became Provost of the burgh, so that he must have been a man of some standing in the community. He may, as Mr H. M. Mackay suggests, have been "a descendant of that Murray (Lovell) who got the lands of Pitgrudy from the Chancellor of the Diocese at the Reformation."<sup>9</sup> The Laird of Pulrossie was his nephew.

Dornoch sustained a great loss by the death of Dean Gray on 21st January, 1638. The writer who completed Sir Robert Gordon's history pays the worthy Dean the following tribute :—"He was much

regretted by the inhabitants of Southerland, among whom he had conversed with great integrity for the space of thirty years, during which time he had a function in the Church, and resided for the most part at Dornogh, where he was actuall minister.'"<sup>10</sup> The tribute would have been a more glowing one had it come from the pen of Sir Robert. The Dean's name appears in the mutilated inscription on the broken slab outside the south wall of the Cathedral nave, which was erected more than a century after his death. He is there styled "the first Protestant Dean of Sutherland." He was succeeded by Mr Alexander Munro, who was translated from Golspie, and was a member of Assembly in 1639. His stipend was augmented by an Act of Parliament in 1641, which has already been quoted. He was deposed in 1649, and his successor was Mr George Gray, a graduate of St. Andrews University, who was a member of Commission of Assembly in 1648, and died in 1662.

The poverty-stricken condition of the burgh in 1647 is indicated in an Act of Parliament of that year by which "an assessment of 54 lib. for the maintenance of the army," laid upon the burgh, was suspended on account of its devastated condition. Dornoch was thus included among "sundrie shyres or burghes burnt waisted or so much rwined That they ar not able to mak reall and readie payt. of the sowmes" imposed upon them for the support of the army.<sup>11</sup> Another Act of 1672 may be here quoted, which ordained certain burghs, including Dornoch, to provide "correction-houses for receaving and inter-

taining of the Beggars, vagabonds and Idle persones within their Burghs." Masters or overseers were to be appointed to set them to work. Each house was to have "a large close sufficiently inclosed for keeping in the said poor people, that they be not necessitat to be allwayes within doors to the hurt or hazard of their health."<sup>12</sup> These correction-houses were intended to serve very much the same purpose as the Labour Homes and Poorhouses of to-day. The finances of the burgh were probably not equal to the expenditure such a scheme implied, unless, in the intervening quarter of a century, Dornoch had passed through a period of exceptional prosperity.

Among the documents relating to this period in the Dunrobin charter-room are a feu disposition dated 5th December, 1642, by John, Earl of Sutherland, to Robert Gray of Swordel "of the said Robert Gray's own proper lands within the Barony of Skibo"; a contract between the Earl and Patrick Dunbar in Cauthill, dated February, 1651, whereby the Earl "sold and disposed" the town and lands of Sidera; a disposition of Drumdivan by the Earl of date 18th February, 1650, to Mr Robert Gray of Achloyne and Anna Dunbar, his spouse; a Special Retour, dated 13th January, 1656, in favour of Robert Gray, Provost of Dornoch, as heir to John Gray, Dean of Caithness, in the manse and croft called the Dean of Caithness' Manse and Croft; a charter of confirmation by William Davidson, Dean of Caithness, to Robert Gray of the Dean's manse and croft, dated 21st April, 1664; a contract of alienation, dated 7th April, 1653,

between Patrick Dunbar of Siderhall and Robert Gray of Achloyne, whereby the town and lands of Davochfin are disposed to Robert Gray; a Decree by the Commissioners for the Administration of Justice in Scotland in favour of Lord Duffus against John, Earl of Sutherland, in 1659, discerning non-payment of the casualties of ward holding, in virtue of the Act of Union abolishing the same.

Of greater interest than any of those documents is a charter by which Bishop Abernethy confirms to John, Earl of Sutherland, and his heirs male of the surname and arms of Gordon, the properties and rights granted to him by Bishop Forbes, including the city and town of Dornoch, together with the right of constructing mills, "lie water seu wynd-mylnes," over any part of Dornoch or its burn. He also gives him the custody of the palace of Dornoch, "which castle and palace were to be maintained at the expense of the said bishop for the reception of the said bishop, as often as he should choose to remain there at his own expense."<sup>13</sup> The charter was drawn up by Mr Robert Paip at Edinburgh on 7th March, 1626, and was witnessed by Robert Munro, Commissary of Caithness, and John Scott, servant of the said bishop. The confirmation by Bishop Abernethy of the authority granted to the Earl by his predecessor to construct windmills in Dornoch strengthens the supposition that Dornoch may have been one of the first places in Scotland where these were erected and used. Information regarding them may have been brought from Holland by some of the Sutherland men who served in the army there.

The Civil War in England ended in the defeat of Charles I and his execution in 1649. The Covenanters, fearful of a return of Episcopacy, had taken up arms against him, and so had contributed to his downfall. The gallant Marquis of Montrose, who at first sided with the Covenanters, afterwards espoused the Royalist cause, to which he rendered heroic service. In 1649 the Earl of Sutherland was commissioned by the Estates to invade Strathnaver and bring into subjection the Mackays, who adhered to the Royalist cause. The cost of the expedition was met by a levy upon the northern counties, the contribution of the burgh of Dornoch amounting to £27. Early in 1650 Montrose landed in Caithness and, marching southwards, occupied the Ord. The Earl of Sutherland, having put strong garrisons into Dunrobin, Skelbo, Skibo and Dornoch, with three hundred men crossed the Meikle Ferry and marched to Tain, where a council of war was held by the leaders of the forces opposed to Montrose. Thereafter the Earl returned to Sutherland; but, though Montrose came by Dunrobin on his southward march, and some of his men had been captured there, he passed on his way without inflicting any damage upon the country owned by his friend of earlier days. Disaster overtook his force at Carbisdale, and Montrose in disguise escaped to the wilds of Assynt, where he was captured. After his capture he was taken to Skibo Castle, where he was kept for two days. In a paper which he gave to the Glasgow Sutherland Association in 1905, the late Rev. Dr Grant quoted from Mr Taylor's Dunrobin



Papers his description of a scene which occurred during Montrose's stay in the Castle, which was occupied at that time by Mr Gray, whose wife was of good family and a lady of some spirit.<sup>13A</sup> The story is that "on the arrival of the Marquis and his guards Mrs Gray prepared a suitable entertainment for them. She presided at the dinner table, at the head of which and immediately before her was a roasted leg of mutton. When Montrose entered the room he was introduced to her by the officers who escorted him, and she requested him to be seated next to her; but Holbourn, still retaining the strict military order he observed on the march, placed the Marquis between himself and another officer, and thus he sat down at the lady of Skibo's right hand and above his noble prisoner before the lady was aware of the alteration. She no sooner observed this arrangement than she flew into a violent passion, seized the leg of roasted mutton by the shank, and hit Holbourn such a notable blow on the head with the flank part of the hot juicy mutton as knocked him off his seat and completely spoiled his uniform. The officers took alarm, dreading an attempt to rescue the prisoner, but the lady, still in great wrath and brandishing the leg of mutton, reminded them that she received them as guests; that as such and as gentlemen they must accommodate themselves to such an adjustment of place at her table as she considered to be correct; that although the Marquis was a prisoner she was more resolved to support his rank when unfortunate than if he had been victorious, and consequently that no person of inferior

rank could at her table be permitted to take precedence of him. Order being restored, and the mutton replaced on the table, every possible civility was thereafter directed by all present towards the Marquis.''<sup>14</sup> That unfortunate nobleman was taken to Edinburgh, where, after trial, he was executed as a traitor to the Covenant. The Laird of Skibo had to answer to the Privy Council for the insult his wife had offered Holbourn, and for that grave offence he was heavily fined.

After Montrose's death Charles II had, perforce, to accept the Covenants as the only way to the throne of Scotland. Having taken an oath that he would agree to the Covenants he came to Scotland, where he was proclaimed King. On behalf of His Majesty the Earl of Sutherland raised a force in the county, which assembled at Dornoch in February, 1651. An old minute of the proceedings of a "Committee of Warr" for the county, quoted in *Old Dornoch*, records the contribution of men from each district, and Mr Mackay's extract<sup>15</sup> from it is as follows:—

" Dornoche, 26 Feby., 1651.

The said day convenied ye haill Comittee of Warr of ye Shyre of Southerland anent ye localitie of ilk Capn. Wt.in ye said cuntrey as followis:—

The Localitie appoynted for Capn. William Gordoun  
in Dornoche.

Skibo	.	.	.	.	.	16 men
Creiche	.	.	.	.	.	16 men
Pulrossie	.	.	.	.	.	15 men



*Photo. by D. Leith*

SKIBO CASTLE



MARQUIS OF MONTROSE



Walter Murray . . . . .	14 men
Ovr. Skibo and Arkboll . . . .	7 men
Siddera, Mr Robert Gray, and Davochfin . . . . .	7 men
The Localitie of Capn. Jon Sutherland.	
Duffus and Clyné . . . . .	67 men
The Toune of Dornoch . . . .	6 men
The Earle for Auchendeane, Auch- chantor, Auchloche and Davoch- fin . . . . .	3 men "

The small levy made upon the burgh may have been due to the fact that most of its male residents were engaged in occupations from which they could not be spared. For the maintenance of discipline in the force it was "ordigned be ye Comitte yat qt sum ever gentleman yatt getts not obedience that he compleane to ye Capn. of his division qr.by he may direct ane p-tie upon ye deficient."

General Middleton seems to have assumed command before 7th April, as a minute of that date is to this effect:—"At Dornoch the Sevinth day of Apryle, 1651, The qlk. day The Comitie of Warr of ye Schyre off Sutherland in prce. of ye Ryt Honble. Lieutenant Gnall. Middleton taking to yer consideration ye greyt obstruction to ye publict sevice of ye kingdome through ye running away of many of ye souldieris delyverit to ye severall officeris . . . . We for preventing of ye lyk w.in ye schyre ordaint proclamation to be public maid at ye Mercat Croce of Dornoch and at ilk paroche church within ye said

Schyre Sundy nixt. That all Runawayes from their Culloris in ye said Earl of Southerland's regiment . . .<sup>16</sup> It appears to have been always a matter of difficulty to prevent Highland soldiers from forsaking the post of duty and visiting their homes, if they were anywhere within their reach. Love of home prevailed through lack of discipline. These brave men loved freedom and chafed under restraint, so that the monotonous routine of barrack life soon became irksome to them.

After his defeat at the battles of Dunbar and Worcester the King had to take refuge on the Continent, while General Middleton was captured at Worcester and confined in the Tower of London. Cromwell, as Protector of the Commonwealth, convened a meeting of Parliament in 1652, to which the Town Council of Dornoch sent a representative with the following commission :—<sup>17</sup>

“ The Commissioners of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England Having required the inhabitants of the Towne of Dornoch to choose one of their number to know from them the Intencon and pleasure of the Parliament of England for a lasting peace in this Island. Wee doe by these presents fully authorise Mr Robert Gordon to goe and waite upon the said Commissioners at Dalkeith, or where they shall happen to bee for the time within this nation. And there to know their pleasure for the settlement of a lasting peace, with full power to our said Commissioner on our behalfe to treat, reasone, determine, and conclude in all thinges that shall happen to bee



proposed there for effectuating the same, and to represent the hardshippes of our poore Towne for redressing thereof so far as may be possible. Firme and stable hold and for to hold whatsoever our said Commissioner doe or lead to be done in the premissis, signed by vs at Dornoch the 15th April, 1652.

M. TRACY  
J. SUTHERLAND  
J. DEMPSTER  
GURLAY LOGAN

JAM. MURRAY  
A. MANSON  
FR. CULOCKE  
GEO. LEITH."

The tone of this Commission is somewhat subservient, and suggestive of the complete subjugation of Scotland by Cromwell, who ruled it well. The members of Town Council, including at least two whose names do not suggest any Highland descent, evidently thought the Commission a good opportunity to make known to those in authority "the hardshippes of oure poore Towne," in the hope that something might be done for their redress. What success, if any, attended their rather piteous appeal is not known; we gather, however, from a document signed by their Commissioner, and headed "Assent of Dornoch to the Right Honourable the Commissioners of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England," that on behalf of the burgh he "does willingly consent that Scotland bee incorporated into and made one Comonwealth with England, and that the same Government that is established in England without King or House of Lords under the Free State and Comonwealth of England may bee derived vnto the people of Scotland."<sup>18</sup> He also declares that those he represented would meanwhile "live peacably vndr

and give obedience vnto the authority of the Parliament of the Comonwealth of England, exercised in Scotland." Little wonder that Gordon of Sallagh, author of the supplement to Sir Robert's history, was so depressed by the surrender of his country's independence that he gave up his task and ended his contribution to history with these words:—"Thus with the losse of the libertie of my nation I end both this year 1651, and my collections, having neither hart nor incoragement to proceed therein."<sup>19</sup>

Another attempt to restore the exiled monarch was made in August, 1653, when the Earl of Glencairn raised a force for that purpose at Lochearn, and led it through Badenoch and Aberdeenshire to Elgin, which he made his headquarters for one month, and where, according to the testimony of one of his officers, the army had "very good quarters, and where they made themselves merry." There he received intimation from General Middleton, who had escaped from the Tower and had joined the exiled King in France, that he had arrived in Sutherland with a commission from the King appointing him to the chief command of the Royal forces in Scotland. Middleton had landed at the Little Ferry in February, 1654, and had brought with him a large supply of powder and arms, which he stored in Skelbo Castle. He was accompanied by several officers who had been appointed to high commands by the King. For the second time he made Dornoch his headquarters, and to it he summoned Glencairn and his army. The events that followed are narrated in detail from his

own personal knowledge and observation by Graham of Deuchrie in his "Account of Glencairn's Expedition," upon which the following narrative is based. On receiving Middleton's message the Earl of Glencairn at once ordered his army to march to Sutherland. A few days after its arrival Middleton ordered a review of the whole force in order that he might inspect the men and their equipment. The muster took place on a Saturday in the middle of March, probably somewhere on the links, as there only could an army numbering 3500 footmen and 1500 horsemen have been accommodated. As there was a good deal of jealousy and bad feeling between his officers and Glencairn's, Middleton made an effort to foster harmony by sharing with them a quantity of wine that had come into his hands through the stranding on the neighbouring coast of "an English Pink" loaded with about forty tuns of French wine. Glencairn was given one tun as his share. He felt keenly the loss of his command, and his resentment was shared by his officers and men. They could hardly restrain their feelings of indignation and sorrow, as their old leader addressed them, and commending to them their new commander, "he wished them all well." So deeply touched were they by his words that, as Deuchrie relates, "several, both officers and soldiers, shed tears, and vowed that they would serve with their old general in any corner of the world."

After the review the Earl of Glencairn invited General Middleton and all his officers to dine with him "at the laird of Kettle's house, four miles south from

Dornoch," where he was quartered. Deuchrie must be allowed to describe in his own words what happened there. "They were all as well entertained by his lordship as it was possible in that country. The grace said, and the cloth withdrawn, his lordship called for a glass of wine, and then addressed the general in these words:—'My lord general, you see what a gallant army these worthy gentlemen here present and I have gathered together at a time when it could hardly be expected that any number durst meet together; these men have come out to serve his Majesty at the hazard of their lives and of all that is dear to them. I hope therefore you will give them all the encouragement to do their duty that lies in your power.' On this up started Sir George Monro from his seat, and said to Glencairn, 'By G—, my Lord, the men you speak of are nothing but a number of thieves and robbers, and ere long I will bring another sort of men to the field.' On which Glengarie started up, thinking himself most concerned, but Lord Glencairn desired him to forbear, saying, 'Glengarie, I am more concerned in this affront than you are'; then addressing himself to Monro, said, 'You, Sir, are a base liar; for they are neither thieves nor robbers but gallant gentlemen and good soldiers.' General Middleton commanded them both to keep the King's peace, saying, 'My Lord, and you, Sir George, this is not the way to do the King's service; you must not fall out among yourselves; therefore I will have you both to be friends'; and immediately calling for a glass of wine, said, 'My Lord Glencairn, I think you

did the greatest wrong in giving Sir George the lie; you shall drink to him, and he shall pledge you.' The noble and good Lord Glencairn accordingly took his glass, as ordered by the general, and drank to Sir George, who, in his old surly humour, muttered some words, which were not heard, but did not pledge his lordship.

"The general gave orders to sound to horse, and Lord Glencairn went out in order to accompany him to the headquarters; but the general would not allow him to go above a mile of the way. His lordship then turned back, having none in his company but Colonel Blackadder and John Graham of Deuchrie. When arrived, he became exceedingly merry, causing the laird's daughter play on the virginals, and all the servants about the house to dance. Supper being now ready and on the table, as my lord was going to sit down, one of the servants told him that Alexander Monro, Sir George's brother, was at the gate. My lord immediately commanded to let him in, and met him at the hall-door, where he saluted him, and made him very welcome, saying, 'You see, Sir, the meat is on the table, and will spoil if we sit not down to it.' He placed Monro at the head of the table, next the Laird's daughter. All present were very merry. My lord told Monro he would give him a spring, if he would dance, which accordingly he did with the rest, the laird's daughter playing. While the rest were merry, his Lordship and Monro stepped outside; they did not speak a dozen words together, as all thought, and after drinking a little longer Monro departed.'"<sup>20</sup>

Having called for candles, Glencairn retired to his room, which he shared with Colonel Blackadder and Graham of Deuchrie, whom he did not on this occasion take into his confidence. No one knew of the purpose of Monro's visit save "one John White, who was his trumpeter and *valet de chambre*." After less than two hours' rest Glencairn, accompanied only by his servant, stole quietly out of the house, unobserved by any of the inmates, who were all asleep. It had been arranged that he should meet Sir George at dawn at some spot midway between his quarters and Dornoch—possibly about Cyderhall. Sir George was accompanied by his brother, both on horseback and "well mounted." The duel that ensued is thus described by Graham of Deuchrie, who may have got his information from the Earl's servant:—"Each of the parties were to use one pistol, after discharging of which they were to decide the quarrel with broad swords. Their pistols were fired without doing any execution, and they made up to each other with their broad swords drawn. After a few passes his lordship had the good fortune to give Sir George a stroke on the bridle-hand: whereupon Sir George cried out to his lordship that he was not able to command his horse, and he hoped he would allow him to fight on foot. My lord replied, 'You base carle! I will show you that I will match you either on foot or horseback.' Then they both quitted their horses and furiously attacked each other on foot. At the very first bout the noble Earl gave him so sore a stroke on the brow, about an inch above his eyes, that he could



not see for the blood that issued from the wound. His lordship was then just going to thrust him through the body, but his man, John White, forced up his sword, saying, 'You have enough of him, my lord, you have got the better of him.' His lordship was very angry with John, and in a great passion gave him a blow over the shoulder. He then took horse and came back to his quarters. Monro came straight away to the headquarters, and his brother had much ado to get him conveyed there by reason of the blood-  
ing both of his hand and head."<sup>21</sup>

The duel was fought on a Sunday morning; it must have been at a very early hour, as before six o'clock Glencairn was arrested in his chamber, and put under the care of a guard commanded by Captain Campbell. By Middleton's orders his sword was taken from him, and he was put "on his parole." This unfortunate incident was followed by another of a similar character which had more serious consequences. Captain Livingstone, one of Monro's friends, and a gentleman named Lindsay, who had accompanied Lord Napier from France, engaged in a hot dispute as to which of the two combatants "was in the right." Having challenged each other, they fought with swords on the links in the early morning, when Lindsay, at the first thrust, pierced his opponent's heart, and he immediately expired. By Middleton's orders Lindsay was at once arrested, tried by court-martial, and sentenced to be shot at the cross of Dornoch that afternoon. This was done, notwithstanding the earnest intercession of Glencairn

and others, who did their utmost to save the unfortunate young man from his tragic fate. These untoward events so widened the breach between Glencairn and Middleton that, within a fortnight after his duel with Monro, the Earl marched away with his own troop in the direction of Assynt, and though Middleton sent a party in pursuit of him, he reached Killin in safety after a long and tedious march.

The occupation of Dornoch by a body of five thousand men must have imposed certain hardships upon the small community, to which their departure must have been a great relief. How long they remained after Glencairn left cannot definitely be ascertained, but their departure was hastened by the advance northward of General Monk with a large army, which pressed hardly on that of Middleton. Ultimately surprised in the neighbourhood of Dalnaspidal, Middleton's force was defeated and dispersed, and he himself escaped with difficulty. Thus the rising of Glencairn ended in failure.

A long-standing dispute between Lord Duffus and the Burgh of Dornoch regarding the cutting of peats was settled by an agreement drawn up "At Dornoch the last day of Marche the yeir of God 1655 yeiris." The parties to the agreement were "Ane nobil lord Alexander Lord Duffus, on the ane pt., and Johne Dempster and Wiliam Gordoun, Bailzies of the Burgh of Dornoch, with the spe'all adwyse consent and assent of the counsal and comunitie of the said Burghe, on the uther pt." The bailies, council and community acknowledged that, though for years they had

been in the habit of casting and leading peats and turfs on the said lord's lands of Pronsie and Evelick, they had done so without any right or title "but be tolerance of the said nobil lord his predecessors. In consideration off the qlk. acknowledgment, and also for the yeirlie dewtie efter spect. and for the love and favour the said nobil lord hes and bearis to the said Brughe and inhabitants thereof," Lord Duffus granted to them, during his lifetime, the liberty "to cast, win and lead peattis and turffis upon the said bounds of Barrone of Pronsie and Eveleick be north and be east Rachan, and from Rachan straicht westward by the Hillhead of Carney to the hill of Rierqr., from thence straight westward to Lochlavachie, and to the north of the saids bounds, as also upone the southe and west of the lands of Evileck benorth and besouth the water thair of allenerlie within ane half quarter of ane myle to the arraball lands and baned grass of the saids lands of Evileck and Aisdill, secluding and debarring the saids hail inhabitants of the said brughe from casting of peattis, truffes, fail, difattis or forgaige beeaft the saids of Evileck any part of Lonestutach at any time heirefter but licence and tollerance of the said lord, his heirs and successors."<sup>22</sup> For this privilege an anuual sum of £20 Scots was paid by the burgh until 1715, when the Lord Duffus of that time forfeited his estates owing to his participation in the rebellion of that year.

Sir Robert Gordon, the historian of Sutherland and the benefactor of Dornoch, spent the evening of his life in Morayshire, where he died in 1656 at the

age of seventy-six. Ever zealous for the advancement of any scheme for the good of Sutherland, Dornoch was his special care, and it owes much to his interest and enterprise. He gave many proofs of his affection for the old burgh and its ancient cathedral, upon whose restoration he had set his heart. His description of Dornoch in the first chapter of his history reads like a prophecy of its future as a famous golf resort. "About this toun (along the sea coast)," he writes, "ther are the fairest and largest linkes (or green feilds) of any pairt of Scotland, fitt for archery, golfing, ryding, and all other exercise; they doe surpasse the feilds of Montrose or St. Andrews."<sup>23</sup> Another token of his devotion to Dornoch and its Cathedral is the letter of advice he wrote his nephew, the young Earl of Sutherland, before his guardianship terminated. This "farewell" letter does not appear to have ever been delivered to the Earl: it remained in the custody of Sir Robert's descendants until 1843, when it was presented to the Duke of Sutherland of that time. It is now preserved at Dunrobin and is to this effect:—

"Do not fail to repair and decore the south ile of the church of Dornogh which is the sepulture of your ancestors. Erect ther a monument for them and a tombe for them and yourself, if it be not performed to your hand, and cause paint about the inner walls of that ile, or vpon the selerine thereoff, the portraitours and pictoures of all the Earles of Southerland with the soume of their lyfs from the beginning . . . Let your chief scooles for learning be at Dornogh . . .



SIR ROBERT GORDON





. . . Mack your residence at Dornogh, in the winter season, and hold the maist pairt of your meittings and Courts ther, that so you may better the toune and pass the time the merrier with the gentlemen of your cuntrey, who will repair thither to pass the winter with you. Enlarge the liberties of Dornogh so far as you can, and proclame a Setterday's market ther, which you shall cause observe weikly and dewly; and becaus this whyle by past all the merchandise and traffic of Strathnaver and Sutherland hath bein transported over to Tayne, whereby it is enriched and Dornogh depauperat; to remeid this you shall mak strait and severe acts in your courts that no merchandise be transported over to Tayne, except it be first brought to the toune of Dornogh and offered to be sold ther.

. . . Be careful (as I said) to enlarge and to mentayne the liberties of the toune of Dornogh because it holds of yourself. Erect scholes ther which may be a seminarie of vertue to instruct the children and youths of your countrey in learning. . . . Suffer as litle wyne and spyce to be brought hither as you can, for that serves to lytle purpois, but to give occasion of drunkenness and gluttonie. Erect it in a Brough royall if you can. . . . Cause erect a bibliothick in Dornogh, and fill it with sufficient store of books, both for your credit and the weill of this countrey, to amend their ignorance which increases through laik of books. This work shall be begun and interprysed to your hand if I live."<sup>24</sup>

The writer shows remarkable wisdom and foresight, except in his fantastic scheme for the adorn-

ment of the south transept of the Cathedral, which was, fortunately, never carried out. Otherwise what he designed for the good of the burgh has, in the course of time, materialised. He nobly fulfilled the pledge with which he concludes his letter by accomplishing the partial repair of the Cathedral and the erection of Dornoch into a Royal Burgh. And now Dornoch possesses in its Academy a seminary of learning of the first order, while the generosity of the late Mr Andrew Carnegie of Skibo has provided it with a fine Library, which has been of the greatest value and benefit to the town. Sir Robert, from his own experience, realized the value of a good library, for he was a keen student of history, and his own private collection, which was a large one for his day, included some rare and valuable books.

The restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660 was an occasion for great rejoicing throughout the country, and yet his was one of the saddest reigns in history. One of the first and greatest questions that had to be decided was whether Presbyterianism or Episcopacy was to be the national religion. At a Parliament which met in Edinburgh on the first day of January, 1661, an Act known as the "Rescissory Act" was passed, which expunged from the statute-book all legislation later than 1633, and proclaimed the supremacy of the King in both Church and State. Thus all that the Covenanters had contended for and accomplished at great cost was swept away. Soon thereafter the Privy Council issued a proclamation to the effect that the King ordained that Episcopacy

should be the form of Church government in Scotland. The northern Synods were in favour of the restoration of Episcopacy, as Presbyterianism had been forced upon the Highlands.

The condition of the Church in Sutherland at the Restoration was wretched. Little is known regarding the clergy, whose numbers were reduced by vacancies in the parishes of Golspie, Lairg, Kildonan, and Farr. The restoration of the Episcopal form of Church government necessitated the appointment of bishops to the vacant sees, and, as the cathedral chapters were defunct, the King had to exercise his royal prerogative for this purpose. On May 7th, 1662, the bishop-nominate of Caithness, along with others, was consecrated in the Abbey Church of Holyrood. On that same day the new bishops took the oath as lords of Parliament, which passed an Act for the restoration of the ancient government of the Church by archbishops and bishops, with all their former rights. Patrick Forbes was the new bishop of Caithness. A son of the minister of Alford and a nephew of the Bishop of Aberdeen, he is said to have been a preacher to the army in Holland, and also to have been one of the first to sign the National Covenant at the direction of the Glasgow Assembly of 1638. He was afterwards minister to the Scots congregation at Delft in Holland, and acted as chaplain to the first Earl of Balcarres, whom he attended at his death in Holland in 1659. Having eventually become attached to the Court of the exiled King, he returned with him to England at

the Restoration. Immediately after his consecration in 1662 he repaired to his diocese, and instituted a claim to the rents which the Earl of Sutherland had been drawing from Church lands. In October of that year he held his first Synod in the Cathedral of Dornoch, where he had recently been installed. The Bishop preached the sermon, and took as his text Jeremiah viii. 22 : “ Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” A petition from the widows of the late ministers of Dunnet and Dornoch for the payment of Ann was granted, the Bishop’s right to the stipend of Dornoch being reserved. The vacancy in Dornoch arose through the death of George Gray, a graduate of St. Andrews University, who died in 1662. The Synod issued directions to the clergy relative to the reading of lessons from the Old and New Testaments, the repetition of the Lord’s Prayer, the duty of catechising, the formation of sessions, the planting of schools in all the parishes, the celebration of Holy Communion, and the repair of ruinous churches. A prevalent abuse was dealt with in the following minute :—

“ The Bishope and Synod considering the great and scandalous abuse of taking oaths of privat persons upon suspicion of malefice done either to ther person or goods by witchcraft or any other unlaufull means, do hereby forbid the giving or taking of such unlaufull oaths under the highest pain of censure.”

This ban upon witchcraft does not seem to have had much effect, as the practice appears to have prevailed throughout the diocese for nearly a century

afterwards. Superstition was engrained in the people, and could not be easily eradicated by the censure of Church courts.

Bishop Forbes apparently spent the winter of 1662-1663 in his diocese, and made Scrabster Castle his residence. He administered the affairs of his extensive diocese with zeal and energy, and thus he gained the confidence and affection of his clergy and people. At a Synod held in Thurso in May, 1663, reports were submitted of the diligence of the clergy in carrying out the instructions of the previous Synod. The aid of Parliament was invoked for the planting of schools, the repair of churches, and the maintenance of bursars at the universities. The Bishop intimated the appointment of Mr William Davidson, Canisbay, as Dean; Mr William Mackay as Chancellor; Mr David Munro, minister at Lairg, as Treasurer; and Mr Alexander Gibson, minister at Bower, as Archdeacon.

The minute of the next Synod, held at Dornoch in April, 1664, shows that satisfactory progress had not been made in the reforms which former Synods had enjoined. The Bishop was asked to take the advice of counsel regarding the case of "severall women within the diocie whose husbands had been absent this many years in Barbadoes and whether dead or alive is uncertain." Despairing of the return of their spouses after so long an interval, they sought the Church's permission to marry again. Another petition of a somewhat different character was referred to the Presbytery of Sutherland, which

was charged with the duty of disposing of it. It was the case of a young man, an aspirant to the sacred ministry, whose qualifications for that profession had apparently not convinced his Presbytery of his fitness for it; he craved the removal of the ban that had been laid upon the exercise of his gifts. The Synod's minute is as follows:—"Mr Jhon Gray, Student in divinitie—whose mouth had been stopped for insufficiency—petitioned the Bishop and Synod to have his mouth opened for exercising his gift where occasion should offer."

At or after a meeting of Synod in 1665, of which there is no record, a deed was executed, which bears the signatures of Pa., B. Cathness; Will Davidson, Dean; Alexr. Polsone, Archdeacon; John Dempster, Chanter; William Macky, Chancellor; D. Munro, Treasurer of Caithness. The various records that are extant all go to prove the diligence and devotion with which Bishop Forbes discharged the duties of his office and laboured for the welfare of his diocese. Nor was he neglectful of the civil duties that devolved upon him as a Lord of Parliament. Notwithstanding the great distance at which his diocese lay from Edinburgh, he was often there attending the meetings of the Legislative Assembly; only a strong sense of duty could have impelled him to undertake so frequently the tedious and trying journey his visits to the south involved. But these must have been bright interludes in the life of one whose lines were cast in places that were far from pleasant. He had found his diocese in a deplorable condition, and



though he had done his utmost to improve it, the district was still in disorder and crime was prevalent. Records show that in 1667 disorders broke out in Sutherland, which was disturbed by family feuds and the ongoings of marauders.

John, 13th Earl of Sutherland, died in 1679. He was known as "the good Earl," and his memory was greatly revered. An old writer says of him:—"It's traditionally told that, as he was a very closs and regular keeper of sermons in his own church, so when the precentor was away, and it was necessary, he would from his own loft have precented, and read the line to the congregation." He was succeeded by his son, George, who became heir apparent on his brother's death in 1637. There is no record of his early boyhood. After the attainment of his majority he appears to have taken some share in the administration of his father's estates. The Earl, in a letter dated July 2, 1660, commissioned him to find a tutor or chaplain for the family of Embo, regarding whose need he thus writes:—"Sir Robert (Gordon of Embo) shoves me that he did acquaint yow that Mr Jhone Gordoune was to leave the family shortly, therfor yow wold doe weill to provyd on for it at farrest against Martimass, bot it wer necessarie presently iff possibly it could be donne. Ther is a good young man who hath the Irishe langwadge presently at Edinburgh, callit Mr Michael Cumming, a brother of Mr George Cumming, minister at Urre; if he could be hard it wer best, because he might be imployit theratter (iff found qualified) to some off our churches. If you

can not find him or get some other, acquaint ws, and we shall cause trye about the lawriatione at Aberdeine, iff we can find anie: for the family will goe quyte lousse iff ther be not dewtie kept wp, and on to owersie them.''<sup>25</sup> The Sir Robert Gordon referred to here was the second baronet of Embo, who married his cousin Jean, daughter of Robert Leslie of Findrassie; their family consisted of three sons, the oldest of whom succeeded to the baronetcy. The original letter is preserved in the Dunrobin charter-room.

There are two others belonging to this period in the same repository, which may be quoted. They were written in 1662 by Lord Duffus to Lord Strathnaver, making complaint regarding the disablement of some of his boats, the men in charge of which had taken mussels from the south side of Little Ferry. The first of them is dated Elgin, Nov. 4th, 1662, and is as follows:—“ My lord, I perceave that your lordship caussed your servantt tacke my fishers rudders for tackeing mussell one this syde off the Ferrie. Trulie, tho it hade bein one the other syde, I would haue louicked your lordship would not haue stode with me for such a bussiness. I would nott refuse your lordship for a bussines off greatter consequense. Butt, my lord, being one this syde, I hope your lordship will not questione my right, being withowt controwerssie as is nottarlie knowin; so, my lord, I desyre and entreatt that your lordship will cause delyuer the men ther rudders, they being mightelie prejudyed for want of. If it hade bein anie othir

hade dine itt I would nott demande them after this maner.”<sup>26</sup> Lord Strathnaver’s reply must have been unsatisfactory and long delayed, as more than a year elapsed before Lord Duffus wrote the second letter. It bears the date “Elgine the 14 December 1663,” and is to this effect:—“My Lord, I have receaued your lordships, and I acknouledge itt was my misfortune I should a bein from home as your lordship returned from the South. . . . As for thatt your lordship wreitts anentt whatt right I haue to the mussel scape, I was newer questioned butt of leatt. Whatt cane be ground off itt I knoue nott, especiallye whair nowe my men tackeis mussells being one this syde of the watter. Wee haue bein in wse off tackeing all kynd off fisheis butt the least questione, and to questione this thatt is so clire and wheiroff we haue bein in possessione so long, I think the land maye be als weill questioned. My lord, ther is noe-thing will macke me neglect all dewtie to your lordship, and I hope your lordship will nott desyre off me butt whatt is just, and in thatt none shalbe more willing to satisfie you than he who shall remaine your lordshippis most humbell serwantt.”<sup>27</sup>

“ALEX. L<sup>D</sup>. DUFFUS.”

There is no record as to how this dispute ended.

The vacancy in the bishopric created by the death of Bishop Forbes in 1680 was filled by the appointment of Bishop Andrew Wood, who was transferred to Caithness in that same year from the See of the Isles. He was a son of the parson of Edzell, and

his mother was a sister of John Guthrie, Bishop of Moray. His first charge was that of Spott, in the near neighbourhood of Dunbar, to which he was appointed in 1665. He became Bishop of the Isles in 1677. On his translation to Caithness he appears to have at once taken a firm grip of the affairs of his diocese, which he proceeded to reorganize.

Mr John Rose, a native of Moray and a graduate of Aberdeen, was transferred from Latheron to Dornoch in 1680. Nothing had apparently been done towards the repair and maintenance of the Cathedral, which had fallen into a ruinous condition. That may be gathered from the "supplication" presented to the Privy Council by Lord Strathnaver, Lord Duffus, and the other heritors of the parish of Dornoch, which reads thus:—

Supplication by John, Lord Strathnaver, James, Lord Duffus, and the other heritors of the parish of Dornoch in the shire of Sutherland, as follows:—

"The kirk of Dornoch (though it be the Cathedral Kirk of the diocese of Sutherland and Caithnes) is for want of reparation goeing altogether to ruine and decay, whereby not only ane ancient structure, which is one of the ornaments of the nation, is likelie to perish, but also the parochioners, who have no other church wherin to heare divine service, and who yit not haveing ane dissenter amongst them, desyre punctuallie to attend it, are extreamlie incomodat and prejudged, being in uncovered walls exposed to all the rigours of tempestuous weather; and the repairing of such a fabrick being a matter of farr

greater charge than the petitioners can be supposed capable to defray tho they be most willing to doe all that can be thought proper and incumbant for them to doe," it is craved that the Council may consider the "burdensomnesse and withall the necessity of so pious and good a work, and in order to the repaireing the said cathedrall, to appoint such a sounge of money as the Councill shall find sufficient for that end out of the vacand steipends of the diocesse of Murray, Rosse, Caithnes and Orckney that are yit unuplifted and which shall for the future fall to be taken up, disposed of and manadged for for that use in maner as the Councill shall appoint."<sup>28</sup>

The Lords remit to the Bishops of Caithnes and Ross and the Dean of Caithnes, Sir George Monro of Culran, Mr John Baine of Delnies, Alexander Urquhart of Newhall, Robert Gordone of Rogart and John Gordone of Embo, or any three of them, to visit the said kirk and consider what its repair will cost and how the expense may be met, and report.

The Commissioners having discharged the duty laid upon them made the following representation to the Council in 1684:—

Supplication by Lord Strathnaver and the rest of the said heritors, stating that a quorum of the Commissioners had met and visited the said Cathedral and found "that it would neid at least six thousand merks to make the samen fitt for hearing divine service," as the Commission and the report given in to the clerks testify, and the petitioners hope that the Lords will not refuse the application of "so much of



the vaccant stipends that are undisposed of benorth Spey ” as will amount to the said sum; and to evidence the serious intention of the petitioners therein, “ they are content to condescend on a collector who shall find caution that whatever is uplifted shall be applied towards the repaireing of the said cathedrall.”<sup>29</sup>

The Lords agree, and ordain Mr Alexander Gordon of Lochbeg to be collector. His bond of caution is dated 28th March, 1684.

At a meeting of Synod held at Thurso in 1682, after conference with a few of the more prominent clergy, Bishop Wood drew up and intimated a series of fourteen instructions on various points for the guidance of the clergy. The Bishop was evidently determined that no favour should be shown in the exercise of discipline, and that no laxity should be permitted in the administration of ordinances, as the following regulations of the Synod of 1687 prove. They enacted that delinquents of both sexes and of “ what qualities soever ” should be “ equallie processed,” as “ the passing by of noblemen and gentlemen makes people suppose the church doe them free from censure, and that they are not lyable to discipline as inferior persons are; but as God is no respecter of persons, neyr. will the church be, and both religion and reason will say that its fitting that the souls of the great men be cared for as well as of the meaner ones, and the greater they are, the greater need there is that they be brought off their evil wayes, that they may be good examples to the meaner people.”



The benefit of marriage was to be denied to persons who could not recite the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, "and if such gross ignorants seek the benefit of marriage, that the marriage be delayed for some competent time, and in the meantime they be enjoined to learn, with certification as effeirs." Private censures were to be performed impartially, and the brethren were enjoined not to conceal one another's faults, provided brotherly admonition had gone before, and the brother admonished had not amended. Fathers were appointed to be privately examined as to their belief before baptism was administered to their children, and "if ignorant to be sharplie rebuked, and anoyr. to hold up the childe, and the parent to stand beside, and this left to the prudence of the bretherein." The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to "be administered and no ways neglected, as the brethren will be answerable." With regard to their pastoral duties, "the bretheren were seriously exhorted to be diligent in the work of the ministrie in their severall congregations, and not only to endeavour to bring people to the knowledge and fear of God, but also to exhort them to continue in their Loyaltie and Duties to the King."

The Bishop does not appear to have attended the last meeting of Synod under Episcopacy, held at Thurso on July 4th, 1688. The sermon was preached by Mr John Rose, minister of Dornoch, who took as his text 1 Cor. 12th chap. and 7th verse. The preacher was the last Episcopal minister at

Dornoch. He appears to have been ordained by Bishop Forbes in 1663, and had been formerly minister at Latheron. On 7th November, 1689, he was summoned before the Privy Council for not reading the Proclamation of the Estates, and for not praying in terms thereof. He proved, however, that the proclamation had not been forwarded in time either to the Sheriff-Depute or to the Clerk of Sutherland, and having declared that he had no scruple to read it, and that he had prayed for William and Mary, he was acquitted. He demitted his charge in 1691, and must have died before 1713, as the Register of Charities of the Episcopal Church bears that on 10th May of that year "his relict was put in ye 2nd class of widows, in regard she had a numerous family." Her husband must have got into trouble before the meeting of Synod at which he preached, as it appointed three Caithness ministers to "meet with the brethren of the Sutherland Presbytery to cognosce upon and make report to the Bishop of a defamatory lybell emitted by Mr John Dempster agt. Mr Jon. Rosse." Whatever the ground of the libel may have been, Mr Rose's continuance in office shows that it was not proved against him.

According to Scott's "Fasti," Bishop Wood "married Janet Carmichael, and had a son David and five daughters. His son became Commissary of Sutherland, and received from his father, in lieu of a sum of money he had advanced to him, certain rents and tack duties, which he was to hold "in time coming during our lifetime and incumbency in

the said see." Wood's tenure of the bishopric terminated sooner than he could have anticipated. On 19th July, 1689, he was deprived of the temporalities of his office by the Act of Parliament which abolished Episcopacy. He retired to his charge near Dunbar, which, during his bishopric, he had held "in commendam," and there he ministered until his death in 1695, at the age of seventy. With him there came to an end the long line of ecclesiastics, worthy and unworthy, who, during the course of many stormy and troubled centuries, guided and administered the affairs of the Church in the distant and difficult Diocese of Caithness.

*CHAPTER VII*

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

FOR several years after the Revolution Settlement and the final establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland there was a great dearth of ministers in Sutherland. The only two in the county of Sutherland in 1693 were Mr William McKay, Dornoch, and Mr Walter Denune, Golspie, who combined with their brethren in Ross to form one Presbytery of Ross and Sutherland. Those two brethren, on account of the grievous scandals within their bounds, petitioned the Presbytery for a visitation, and it accordingly met at Dornoch on October 3rd, 1693. Mr Robert Gray of Skibo was the lay representative at that meeting. Complaint was made that Mr Walter Ross, incumbent at Rogart, performed baptisms and marriages in the parishes of Dornoch and Golspie. He was one of the old Episcopal clergy who were allowed to remain in their parishes, and the fact that his services were in request in parishes where Presbyterian ministers were settled showed that the new form of Church government was not acceptable to the community as a whole. The Presbytery, after consideration of the complaint, summoned Mr Ross to their next meeting at Tain; but he failed to appear, and his case was referred to the first Commission of Assembly that should visit their bounds. At this meeting Mr Denune and the

Earl of Sutherland were appointed the Presbytery's representatives to the ensuing General Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

Mr William McKay, the first Presbyterian minister of Dornoch, was the only son of John McKay of Achness; he was a member of Assembly in 1692, and two years later he was translated to the parish of Cromdale in Strathspey. The vacancy thus created extended over a period of eight years, though repeated efforts were made to fill it. One of these failed owing to a young probationer's strong antipathy to Dornoch, and his determination not to settle there on any consideration. Dornoch and Fearn had both called this Mr Hugh Duff, and at the meeting of Presbytery at Cromarty on 23rd December, 1698, at which those calls were considered, "he declared to the Presbytery that he could not think of settling in Dornoch without violence to his conscience. Indeed, that he would rather leave the province and go elsewhere, wherever the Lord in His providence would dispose of him. The Presbytery, after much deliberation, resolved to settle him at Fearn, seeing that he is so inclined, and that the people of Fearn have shown more activity and enthusiasm than the people of Dornoch." Thus the close of the century found Dornoch without a pastor.

The vacancy was at length filled by the induction in 1702 of Mr Archibald Bowie, who had been licensed in the previous year by the Presbytery of Lanark, which suggests that he was a student of Glasgow University. Though no Session records covering his ministry are extant, we

gather from the Presbytery minutes of that date that his ministry at Dornoch was not a happy one. A petition he presented to the Presbytery in 1707, in which he sets forth his grievances, gives a picture of the melancholy condition of the church there throughout his ministry. He complains that during the six years he has been minister at Dornoch he has had no church to preach in, but only "some thing of a meeting house," which could not accommodate "half of the paroch." He describes it as "such a confused place that the third part of such as come to ordinances cannot see the minister nor he them, which is the cause of great disorders in time of divine worship, those whom the minister does not see, some of them sleeping out the whole time of divine worship, others talking and conversing one with another as if they were in a tavern; so that the most of them that come to hear the word rather profane than sanctify the Sabbath." The roof must have leaked so badly that it afforded scanty protection to the worshippers, "severals in time of rain being obliged to remove from their seats, and the Minister many a time wett from top to toe," while access to the house was at times a matter of considerable difficulty "by reason of under water coming in to the said meeting house." For several years the heritors had failed to fulfil their obligation to pay an annual rent of forty pounds Scots to the owner, which was aggravated by the fact that "the rent of the said meeting house is a good part, if not the whole, of the livelyhood of a poor widow and her orphant." The heritors had also failed to imple-



ment the promise they made to him at his ordination to provide a church within a year, and had taken no steps towards its erection. Further, his manse was "no way fitt for living in. Its no way watertight; it wants partitions and divisions without which none can live comfortably in it." For two years after his coming to Dornoch he was "necessitate to pay meal for an house in the Town of Dornoch without ever being considered by the paroch."<sup>2</sup> He describes his glebe as insufficient, and as "the worst land of any in or about the town."<sup>3</sup> A further grievance was that "the inhabitants of the town have made a common road through the very midst of it, by the which in the summer and harvest tyme they bring home their foggage, so that this occasions the destroying the best part of my corns." But what most grieved him was the want of a proper kirk-session, "seeing the want of an eldership is the cause why profanity and vice does so much abound in this place." Another complaint was that he "never had ane pleasant payed stipend," having had to enforce payment by legal proceedings, and sometimes to go without his stipend for two or three years.

It is not surprising that, under such conditions, he craved an Act of Transportability, which would have set him free to accept a call from another parish. His grievances were admitted by the heritors and others present, who expressed their regret that they could not remove the most serious of them. They bore unanimous testimony to their minister's exemplary conversation, his diligence and faithfulness in

the exercise and discharge of the several parts of his ministry among them. The Presbytery's inquiry on that occasion revealed the fact that there were two beadles serving the church, and a schoolmaster who acted as precentor and session-clerk; with their discharge of their various duties satisfaction was expressed. The Presbytery, after serious consideration of Mr Bowie's petition, found that "there were many and weighty grievances and well known to them therein contained, and such as will be very graminous and uneasy to him, if not intolerable." They earnestly urged the heritors and other gentlemen present "to concur with them in concerting measures for the removal of their minister's grievances," and they threatened that "if those responsible did not take speedy and effective measures to that end," they might deem it to be their duty to grant Mr Bowie's crave for an Act of Transportability.

The Cathedral must have been in a dilapidated condition at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the congregation had to worship elsewhere. Almost a century had passed since Sir Robert Gordon had restored the transepts and chancel, and it is doubtful if in the interval anything had been done to maintain the fabric, which was bound to have deteriorated to a great extent. It is impossible to identify the meeting-house that served as a place of worship during Mr Bowie's ministry and of which he so bitterly complains. The suggestion that it was any ecclesiastical or public building is rendered untenable by the statement in Mr Bowie's petition that it was





*Photo. by J. G. Phimister*

# SARCOPHAGUS OF SIR RICHARD



*Photo. by W. G. Jamieson.*

# CATHEDRAL AND ST. FINBARR'S CHURCHYARD

private property, and belonged to some poor widow who depended upon its rent for her support.<sup>4</sup>

Though all efforts to redress Mr Bowie's grievances proved futile, the Presbytery deferred the granting of his repeated request for an Act of Transportability. No tradesmen in the neighbourhood could be found to undertake the work of repairing the Cathedral, and an attempt was made to procure them in the adjoining county of Ross. On 28th September, 1708, the fabric was inspected by the Presbytery, with the assistance of tradesmen, who found "that it is altogether decayed, without a roof, with crazes in the walls, so that it will be more easy to build a new church than repair the present church, it being a large ruinous fabrick of a cathedral."<sup>5</sup> Thereafter the Minister being inquired what number of catechisable persons he might have in his parish, he declared there would be twixt threttain and fourteen hundredth, so that the Presbytery's judgment with the concurring judgment of such of the parishioners present is that the parrish will need a kirk of the following dimensions, viz., sixty foot in lenth and eightain in breadth, and an Isle with an arch off of the middle of the body of the sd. house threttie foot in lenth and eighteen in breadth, the side walls to be fourtain foot high from the foundations, with six doors up and down to give entrance to both houses, and nine large windows where they shall be found most convenient, and the Church to be erected upon the ground commonly called Templebar as being judged the most convenient place."<sup>6</sup> This minute has been quoted at length to

show the Presbytery's idea of the kirk they wanted to supersede the ancient fane of St. Gilbert. It is truly a matter for profound thankfulness that better counsels prevailed, and that Dornoch was saved from the erection of such a building as the Presbytery then contemplated. For that the credit, if any, is due to the failure of the heritors to provide the money needed for the erection of the new church. They absented themselves from a meeting of Presbytery on 13th April, 1709, to which they had been invited for the purpose of arranging for the fulfilment of their obligations, even though letters of horning had been obtained against them. The Presbytery appointed George Dunbar and George MacCulloch, Bailies of Dornoch, "to stent the parish conforme to the will of the said letters." Those gentlemen having declined the duty assigned to them, the Presbytery proceeded to discharge it by stenting the parish, and appointing George MacCulloch, messenger, to charge the heritors to make payment of their respective proportions of the 3000 merks needed for the erection of the new church.<sup>7</sup> Fortunately their designs were thwarted by the contumacy of the heritors, which exhausted the patience of the Presbytery, and Mr Bowie was granted the freedom he sought. Discouraged in his ministry by the conditions under which he laboured, and with a poor stipend of only 700 merks (£40) to support him, we do not wonder that he took advantage of his attendance at the General Assembly of 1710 to look around for a more desirable parish. This he found in Monzie, Perthshire, to which he was translated in October, 1710.



Prior to Mr Bowie's departure for the Assembly the Presbytery had declared the meeting-house in which services were held to be "in such a case that the people cannot meet in it," and they called upon the heritors "to provide a house for preaching in untill a church be built." At a meeting of Presbytery on May 17th, 1710, attended by Hector Munro of Novar, representing Lord Strathnaver, and Mr James Sutherland of Evelack, collectors were nominated for "uplifting the Three Thousand Merks Scots formerly condescended on for repairing the said Kirk of Dornoch," and those appointed at a later meeting were Sir John Gordon of Enboll, Hector Munro of Novar, and George Dunbar, Bailie of Dornoch. They appear to have achieved little success, for it was reported to a meeting of Presbytery held in January, 1711, that none of those responsible for the repair of the church had paid except Barbara Lesly, Life-rentrix of Sidera.

The church was declared vacant on the first Sunday in February, 1711, and the congregation had to be content with very occasional services while the vacancy lasted. A Mr Thomas Chisholm, who had been appointed to Kilmorack and could not get access to his own parish, officiated at Dornoch on four Sabbaths; otherwise church ordinances were, for the most part, suspended, and no progress was made towards the repair of the Cathedral. The vacancy was a prolonged one. Lord Strathnaver intimated his desire that the Rev. Daniel Mackenzie, Kingussie, should be translated to Dornoch; but the Synod vetoed

the proposal.<sup>8</sup> It was not until September, 23rd, 1713, that the vacant charge was filled by the induction of the Rev. Robert Kirk. He was the son of the well-known minister of Aberfoyle, author of "The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies," who also took part in a Gaelic translation of the Bible, and published a Gaelic Psalter in 1684. He died in 1692, and his tombstone bears the inscription, "Robertus Kirk, A.M., Linguae Hiberniae Lumen." There was a popular tradition that he did not die, but that he had been spirited away by the fairies, who were his own people. It was the son of this remarkable man who, under the providence of God, became minister of Dornoch at a period of great spiritual destitution in the parish. He was licensed in 1712 by the Presbytery of Haddington, whose Highland Bursar he had been. As a probationer he was set apart by the Commission of Assembly for the supply of vacancies in any Highland Presbytery that would invite him to their bounds and "promise to encourage him." The Presbytery of Dornoch, having been so advised, instructed the Moderator to write "with the very next post inviting and promising him all suitable encouragement." So anxious was the Presbytery to secure his services that another letter was addressed to the Moderator of the Commission "holding forth the desolate circumstances of their bounds notwithstanding the peaceable access which may be still had to the vacancies," and craving the Commission "not only to send Mr Kirk but Mr Walter Ross, if licensed, and some other young men they may think proper,

and that as soon as possible.”<sup>9</sup> To this urgent appeal the Commission replied that “it was hoped Mr Kirk will be prevailed with to go North, but that his greatest stop was the want of a viaticum.”

That difficulty was apparently overcome, as, on June 30th, 1713, Mr Kirk presented his credentials to a meeting of the Presbytery, which gave him a cordial welcome. Next month he was called to Dornoch; but, before his ordination in September, Mr Kirk, “in regard yr. was no Kirk nor Manse that is habitable,” asked for an assurance from the heritors that they would provide these within a year. Mainly through the intervention and influence of Lord Strathnaver, the heritors attended a meeting of Presbytery on January 12th, 1714, and considered a report upon the fabric of the Cathedral, submitted by Mr George Ogilvie, mason, Golspie. He declared “that no less than three thousand five hundred merks would repair the Isles of the Old Church, repair the Steeple, and put the Kirk under Lock and Key making it a fitt place for Divine Worship, excepting only that he did not undertake to Glass the Church.” Though this offer was accepted by the heritors, the repair of the church, begun early in 1714, was so greatly hampered and delayed by their failure to provide the necessary funds that, in April, 1715, Mr Kirk complained to the Presbytery that “though the work has been begun more than a year bygone and carried on to some length, yet by the delay of some and the refusal of others of the said Heritors to pay in their proportions of the sd. expence . . . . the

sd. work is at a stand and in a manner deserted by the workmen for want of materials and charges to subsist them at it." He further complains "that his health is much impaired by preaching in the sd. unrepaired walls, which if continued but for a short time will probably render him useless to any people."<sup>10</sup> Despairing of redress to these grievances, he craves the Presbytery to grant him an Act of Transportability. His petition was heard by the Presbytery "with much sorrow and concern." It was followed by one from George Ogilvie, mason, "showing his being about to leave ye work of the reparation of the Kirk of Dornoch for want of materials or charges to subsist his workmen." Ineffective efforts were made to bring the defaulting heritors to a sense of their duty, and finally a deputation from the Presbytery waited upon Lord Strathnaver to invoke his aid, which he readily gave, making a personal appeal to the heritors which had the desired effect. With one or two exceptions, they agreed to pay their share of the expenditure, and the work of repair went on. It was probably not completed before the autumn of 1715.<sup>11</sup>

In the last week of January, 1715, a meeting of Presbytery was held at Dornoch, which lasted for three days, and transacted much important business. Reference was made to the "Thanksgiving Day appointed by Publick Authority for our Sovereign King George his peaceable accession to the Throne of great Britain and the dissappointment of a Popish Pretender." The third day's meeting began at 7 a.m., and the minute opens with a discussion upon

the moral condition of the district. It ended with a resolution to the effect that "the Presbytery considering with grief the abounding of the horrid sin of uncleanness in the bounds, and that the loss of goods is of more weight to deter the generality from their filthiness than any regard of God or the censures of the Church, and considering that the pecuniary mulcts appointed by the Law of the Land are far from being exacted by those concerned to do so, Doe therefor appoint that the Several Brethren use their utmost endeavours with their Session Bailies to be more diligent in raising such fines. . . . ." King George's proclamations for the encouragement of piety and the suppression of vice and immorality were ordered to be read from the various pulpits in the Presbytery after divine worship on the first Sabbath of every quarter. A violent storm in the last week of February, 1715, necessitated the postponement of a Presbytery meeting until the following week, when "the Presbitery being informed of gross and abominable practises in some places of the Country by Musick, playing and dancing at Lykwakes, and promiscuous dancing at that and other occasions," enjoined the brethren to "read from their pulpits the Acts of Assembly against such abuses," and to warn their people against them "by exposeing the Heathenism of them."

Of the Rebellion of 1715 there are but one or two faint echoes in the Presbytery minutes. That court could not meet at Dornoch on the second Tuesday of December in that year "owing to the circumstances

of the time and the troubles, and appoint a fast.” Some brethren offered as their excuse for absence from another meeting “ the confusion of the tymes and other accidents,” while the minute of a meeting on 3rd January, 1716, appointing a day of fasting, refers to “ the unnaturall rebellion raised by a popish and Jacobite malignant faction in favour of a popish Pretender in occasioning an intestine warr in this our native Land, which has raged now for a considerable time, and yet continues the evill that it hath produced and still threatnes to our holy religion and civill liberties, the probabilitie of its leaving our land desolate and a field of blood, if not soon to be suppress.” The war clouds had dispersed when the Presbytery met on March 7th, 1716, and resolved that “ taking into consideration that by reason of the troubles of the times and other emergencies they could not fulfil a former appointment with respect to parochiall visitation do now resume the same.”<sup>12</sup>

Three prominent men in the district appear to have been so little affected by “ the troubles of the tymes ” that they ignored the National Fast observed on August 23rd, 1715, and went about their ordinary concerns that day. The complaint made to the Presbytery was “ that Skibo and Pulrossy hade broken the late fast day appointed by authority, by causing their tennents lead home their fewel on the said day,” and also that Sir John Gordon of Embo (as it was represented by the minister of Lairg) “ hade flitted from the said paroch to the paroch of Dornoch on the said fast day.” Those gentlemen afterwards expressed



regret to the Presbytery for their offence, and there the matter ended.

That the Church kept a stricter supervision over the old Episcopal clergy after the Rebellion is indicated by a minute of Presbytery, dated March 15th, 1716, which bears that "the Presbytery acting upon a reference from the Synod appointed the members to make inquiry regarding the behaviour of Episcopal incumbents and make report. As for intruders and meeting house preachers they have none among them."

In the early eighteenth century Dornoch had a library, which appears to have been under the control of the Presbytery. Two of its members reported to a meeting on 27th January, 1711, that they had visited the library "and found all the books Intire, and that they had marked all the books on the back and set them in order in a press." Bailie George Dunbar had supplied the press, and he had been responsible for the care of the library. A year later he asked the Presbytery to relieve him of his obligation, "seeing the books were Intire and the press in which they were under lock and key." The Presbytery granted his request, and appointed the Moderator to "seal the press and keep the key." Books were precious in those days, and the Presbytery kept strict watch over the volumes under their care. Some idea of their character may be derived from a report Mr Kirk made in 1712 as to the books that were wanting, which included "Kettlewell's Practical Believer," "Usseri Eccles. Brittanicæ Antiquit.,"

‘Wilkins on Prayer,’ ‘Kirkwood’s Family Book and Magna Charta.’ The report stated that the ‘Library was in good enough case.’

Superstition had a strong hold of the people of Sutherland at this period, and the Church Courts did their utmost to denounce and suppress it. In this connection a Presbytery minute of November, 1713, may be quoted. ‘The provincial Synod of Ross and Southerland taking to their serious consideration that in several places within their bounds, some persons when sick or in providence sustaining the loss of Cattle or other things doe oblige such persons in their neighbourhood which they suspect to bear malice, envie, or ill will against them to meet and swear on the Bible or on Iron that they bear them no ill will and that they are not the causes of their sufferings, after citations are given on the Lord’s Day to appear on the next day to give their oath fasting. The which practice being a horrid profanation of the Lord’s most holy name and very frequently of his day, as also acknowledging of the Devil in afflictions which should be taken from the Lord’s hand, and further a cherishing of a most abominable heathenish superstition,” therefore the Synod felt bound to acquaint their people of “the evil of that most heinous wickedness,” exhorting those who were guilty of it to repentance and amendment.<sup>15</sup>

The slow progress made by education in the district may account to some extent for the prevalence of superstitious beliefs and practices. Ther

existed a widespread and deep-rooted prejudice against education, and a disregard of its value, as is evident from the frequent complaints made by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge of the poor attendance at the schools they had planted in various parts of the county. These they repeatedly threatened to remove elsewhere. As early as 1616 an Act of Privy Council had enjoined the establishment of schools in every county and parish where it was possible. Though this Act was ratified by statute in 1633, many parishes had no schools until the end of the seventeenth century. An Act of 1696 made legal provision for at least one school in every parish, but the process of establishing parochial schools in Sutherland extended over a long period. The Presbytery of Dornoch in 1715 took active measures to enforce the Act, and Lord Strathnaver convened a special meeting of the Commissioners of Supply at Dunrobin on October 22nd, 1718, twenty-two years after the passing of the Act, in order to establish legal schools. Mr Kirk was instructed to appear for the Presbytery, and was invested with power, in the event of the heritors refusing to erect schools, "to protest in the hands of a notary public for their not obtempering Acts of Parliament." No meeting was held owing to the absence of Lord Strathnaver; but the Church was evidently eager to do its best to further the interests of education in the district.

Dornoch appears to have been the earliest educational centre in the county; it had a Grammar

School in the sixteenth century. The first teacher in the eighteenth century of whom there is any record was a Mr Keith, who also acted as precentor and session clerk; he left the parish in 1716. His successor was Mr James Williamson, who in December, 1716, was "called by the heritours of the parish of Dornoch, Magistrates, and Kirk Session thereof to be Teacher of the Grammar School there." He brought letters of commendation from Dr Hamilton, Professor of Divinity in Edinburgh University, and the minister of Ormiston, who bore testimony "both as to his parts and piety, as also his fitness for teaching of youth," and gave him the credit of being "an excellent Humanist." He proved a dismal failure, and within a year a libel was brought against him, and considered by the Session. It contained four charges, viz. :—

1. "That the children under his charge made no proficiency in their learning, and that the parents of these children were obliged to take them away and send them to other places, which tends to the prejudice of both this Town and County."

2. "That he makes a common practise of beating children with his staff and feet, and that whereas formerly there was here the most flourishing school in the three Shires, that now there were only three scholars, and these were to be taken away how soon they could be provided elsewhere."

3. "That he sung with such a pitiful low voice in the large Church that he is not heard by many in the said congregation when either reading or singing the Psalm."

4. "That he used such familiarity with his scholars that now he lost all his authority in his school."

5. "That Mr George Gordon, Professor of the Oriental Language in Aberdeen, told in open company after examining some of his scholars that they were starved in the very fundamentals of Grammar."

The Session accordingly dispensed with his services on the ground of incapacity, though there was no imputation against his moral character. He went from Dornoch to North Ronaldshay in Orkney, and afterwards became minister of the Fair Isle.

Lord Strathnaver strongly urged the appointment to the vacant post of a Mr William Gordon, who had been deposed from the mastership of the Society school at Lairg owing to a "fama" against him in that parish. The Session declined to have him; but Lord Strathnaver persisted in his nomination, and addressed to Mr Kirk the following letter, dated "Dunrobin, June ye 2nd, 1718":—

"Reverend Sir,—The school of Dornoch being now vacant, I resolve to bestow it upon Mr William Gordon, late schoolmaster at Lairg. I being the only heritor that pays any of his salary your interest as minister of Dornoch I expect, else you must resolve if any oyr. be pitched upon, I'll pay no salarrie.

"Your assured friend and servant,

"STRATHNAVER."

Backed by such authority, Mr Gordon "intruded himself upon the school," but Mr Kirk, supported

by the Presbytery, and not intimidated by Lord Strathnaver's threat, ordered him to leave the school immediately, which he did.

A Mr Sheriff was session-clerk in 1720, but there is no record of his appointment as teacher of the school. In any case his tenure of office was brief, as in June, 1721, Mr William Mackenzie was elected to the combined offices of schoolmaster, session-clerk and precentor, which he held until November, 1723, when Mr John Henderson succeeded him. At this time the school at Dornoch was the only one in the parish, and the Synod in 1718 recommended that "a Royal School" should be established at Torboll, "five miles from the parish Kirk<sup>14</sup> . . . which hath above two hundred families within three miles of it."

Dornoch's first resident doctor, so far as it can be ascertained, was Dr Alexander Ross, who came to Dornoch in 1717. Previous to that he had practised in Tain, where he had achieved success in his profession and was extremely popular. He has been described as "a good sportsman, a good scholar, and a popular physician." And yet he had to seek refuge in Dornoch from the censure of the Presbytery of Ross, which had, after due trial, found him guilty of profaning the Lord's Day by habitually absenting himself from church ordinances, and also of heresy by arguing against the being of God and talking of the Scriptures as though they were but a tradition. He was sentenced to stand in sackcloth before the congregation of Tain on specified Sundays and make a full confession of his faith. The doctor duly



appeared at church on the days appointed; but at the crucial moment his servant, in obedience to his master's private instructions, always arrived in great haste at the church door, and called out loudly that his master was wanted at once to attend some serious case. This comedy continued for a considerable period, during which the shrewd doctor evaded the penalty imposed upon him; but eventually he got tired of the game, and came to reside in Dornoch. He had not been there long, however, before he found himself again in the grip of the Church Courts. The charge on this occasion was Sabbath profanation. The Synod of Ross and Sutherland, greatly concerned over the desecration of the Sabbath by parties crossing the Meikle Ferry for pleasure, had passed an Act in 1721, prohibiting all ferrymen within their bounds from crossing their ferries on Sabbath, except in cases of necessity. On a Sabbath morning in February, 1722, a party of gentlemen from Sutherland, including Dr Ross and George Gray of Skibo, arrived at the Meikle Ferry, and, with threats and pleas of urgency, insisted upon being taken across to the south side of the ferry. After crossing, they made their way to Tain, which they reached about an hour before the church service began. There they spent a great part of the day drinking in a friend's house, after which they rode through Easter Ross to the Invergordon Ferry, which some of them crossed that night. Their escapade created a great sensation in Ross, and they had all to appear before the Presbytery, confess their guilt, and profess their

sorrow, pledging their word that the offence would not be repeated. No information is available as to whether Dr Ross practised in Dornoch or not; it is known that he continued to reside there until his death in 1724.

This case and the two that follow, which belong to the same decade, afford evidence of the determination of the Church Courts to enforce Sabbath observance and to punish offenders, whatever their rank or position. On a Sunday morning in June, 1717, John Sutherland of Little Torboll, accompanied by some Rogart friends, set out for Lochbroom, "and did that day ride from his own house in the parish of Dornoch thorow the parishes of Rogart, Lairg and Creich, particularly he and his company rode close by the meeting house of Insnalin in time of Divine worship and gave no small offence to those that saw him in the several parishes thorow which he rode." He was cited to the next meeting of Presbytery, and not compearing the citation was repeated several times until in November Mr Kirk reported he had gone south to Edinburgh. The Presbytery waited his return, and when, early in the following year, it received information that he was home again, the Presbytery resumed its citation, and threatened to adopt severe measures if he did not obey it. He wrote a letter begging the Presbytery to excuse him on the ground "that his circumstances were such that he could not appear in publick at that time"; his excuse was accepted, but the citation was continued until, worn out by the pertinacity of the

Presbytery, Torboll, after a whole year's evasion, appeared before that Court, and was severely rebuked. Had he remained contumacious much longer, he would have been excommunicated. The other case was one in which the Presbytery having been informed that "some officers in their bounds make intimation at Kirk doors on ye Lord's day to their masters tennants of the carriage they are to do on the ensuing week the Presbitry having heard and considered this representation do strictly discharge the sd. prophane practice for the future, with certification that any who shall do the same shall be proceeded against with the censures of the Church as gross prophaners of the Lord's day, and appoint intimation thereoff be made from the several pulpits in the bounds."<sup>15</sup> These extracts prove that the Church Courts in those days were the guardians of law and order: the authority of the Church was supreme at that time, and it exercised its power impartially and withal unsparingly. Nor must it be forgotten that the civil power was always willing to co-operate with the Church in her efforts for the moral and social welfare of the people. The Kirk Session records afford abundant evidence of that. One of the Magistrates was usually an elder, and he was known as the Session Bailie. He was invested with authority to impose civil penalties, and was much the same as an Honorary Sheriff-Substitute of to-day.<sup>16</sup>

The accommodation in the burgh of Glencairn's large force in 1654, and afterwards of the men raised

by the Earl of Sutherland for the suppression of the '15 Rebellion, must have necessitated the utilisation of public buildings for quartering the troops. The Cathedral even may not have been spared that indignity, and its dilapidated condition in the early years of the eighteenth century may have been partly due to that. The Castle would almost certainly be used for military purposes, and its occupation by soldiers would account for the fact that in 1720 Lord Strathnaver found it necessary to expend the large sum of 2300 merks upon its repair. The work was executed by a Tain mason of the name of Stronach. The Council House was also likely to be commandeered in such circumstances, and it appears to have been in a ruinous condition in 1730. Though no date can be assigned for its erection, there is documentary evidence that it was in use at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when a jury of burgesses held an inquiry within its walls.<sup>17</sup> It was so dilapidated in 1730 as to be beyond repair, and the Town Council had to face the serious undertaking of erecting a new building. The minute of Town Council recording their resolution is dated 13th January, 1730, and states that "In pursuance of ane Representation given in by James Weir and Kenneth Sutherland, Baillies forsd. Shewing the Inconveniency and Great Loss which the Burgh has and doth sustain by the want of a sufficient prison and Council House, The Council finds the same to be most unsafe and troublesome For which reason as the above saids Baillies are Resolved and doe propose to build ane



*Photo. by W. Jamieson.*

DORNOCH CASTLE FROM THE NORTH-EAST





sufficient Town House consisting of ane Grand Council House, a Gentleman prison, and Clerks Room, with four shops in the lower storey, and ane stairs ascending in the outer. They ‘nemine contra Dicente’ Agreed That the samen be Built upon the public charges of the said Burgh, Ordaining the said Baillies to pull down the old Town Tolbooth and Council House, finding the samen unsufficient and not capable of Reparation—and to make up the stones thereof for the said new building, which is to be built by consent foresaid upon the stance commencing from the Cross eastward, allowing six foot of a pass Between the said Cross and the wester Gavol of the said new Town House.” . . . The minute, according to a custom which continued until about thirty years ago, was signed by all the members of the Council, headed by Lord Strathnaver as Provost. His signature is followed by those of James Weir, Kenneth Sutherland, John Sutherland of Little Torboll and John Sutherland of Riarquhair.

The Council had to resort to various expedients to raise the money needed to defray the cost of the new building they contemplated; but notwithstanding their devotion to the building fund of the revenues from “the ston quarries and lime shells” and “the dues of the Great Bell and hand Bell and graves,” as also “a stent” of £12 upon the citizens in 1731 “for bringing on and forwarding the building of the new Town House” and a charge upon the Heritors of £5 for stones and shell lime for the Manse, besides a donation of £5 from the Convention of

Royal Burghs, the progress of the work was hindered by lack of the necessary funds. A further effort was made at the annual meeting of Council in 1732 for the election of magistrates, known as the "Michaelmas Head Court." It passed the following resolution:—"The Which Day The Magistrates, Town Councill, and whole Comunity of the said Burgh at this Head Court Takeing to their consideration the Cess due by the Burgh to His Matys. Receiver General and that they presently want a Tolbooth or Town House, and also considering that there are a great many Brewers and retailers of ale and other liquors within the Burgh who pay no public burdens to the Burgh, nor contribute anything for the public service, and that there are severall persons in the Country adjacent who trade in and about the said Burgh who are not Burgesses and Freemen thereof, Therefore it is hereby enacted . . . that each brewer and retailer of ale, spirits, or other liquor within the said Burgh, not being a Burgess or free trader, shal be Lyable to the Treasaurer . . . of one merk Scots money for each Broust of ale less or more brewed by them within said Burgh and Liberties thereof. . . ." The imposition of this new tax does not seem to have produced the revenue expected, and the Council might have abandoned their scheme had the Earl of Sutherland not come to their aid in 1735. As Provost he doubtless felt that the reputation of the Burgh was at stake, and through his factor, Mr Robert McAllastair, he intimated to a meeting of Council on 30th July, 1735, that he was

“willing to build the Town house upon their giving him fourteen years Tack of the customes of Dornoch, to which the Council agreed.” . . . A roup of customs on 18th October, 1733, shows that they included Ordinary Customs, Toll, Stallinger, Brewers, and Bells, with Miln, Stones, and Shells”: the revenue derived from them ranged from £20 to £25 yearly.<sup>18</sup>

The plan for the building must have been a somewhat ambitious one if its erection involved an expenditure exceeding £300 sterling. A contract between the Town Council and Donald Junior, a Tain mason, for its erection affords some idea of its character and dimensions. With an inside measurement of 42 × 16 feet it was to be “all vaulted with two foot ston and lime work twixt each vault, and the second storie to consist of a steple sixteen feet squair within walls with a wing to the east of ten foot one way and sixteen foot the other; as also another wing to the west side of the steple consisting of ten foot one way and sixteen foot the other within walls, with two vaults in the steple above the second floor, with doors, windows, and cunzies, and tabling conform to forsaid.” The walls were to be 3½ feet thick, and it was to have “ane turnpyke at two shillings Scots the foot of hewn step in length, and for the slates of the said turnpyke conform.” The “turnpyke” was the outside stone stair which gave access to the upper storey. The contractor was to receive £9 Scots and one boll oatmeal per rood, which was “to be paid as said work goes on, with

two bolls malt for morning drink during the continuance of the said work." The new building must have been begun by 1738, as in November of that year the Council appointed Bailies Sutherland and Dunbar to visit "the work made by William Montgomery upon the new Council House . . . and make their Report thereon . . . betwixt and the fifth day of December next." The records of the Town Council from November, 1738, to June, 1750, contain no information regarding the progress of the work, which may have been suspended owing to the outbreak of the '45 Rebellion. That it was not completed in 1750 may be gathered from the minute of a Town Council meeting in June of that year, which states that the Councillors present "taking under their consideration the View and design of rearing up the Town house long ago projected, and in order to have the same finished and compleated, have resolved and do hereby resolve that application shall be made to the Noblemen, Gentlemen, and others within the County of Sutherland, as well as others friends to the Burgh for their aid or contribution for compleating that Work." This action on the part of the Council followed upon a complaint made to the magistrates by the Sheriff regarding the condition of the Court-House and Jail. The old chapter house may have been used as such while the new Council House was in process of erection, and its condition, after its possible occupation by Loudon's soldiers, and afterwards by Cromartie's men in 1746, could not have been otherwise than deplorable. There is

evidence to prove that it was utilized as a criminal prison until 1767.

A minute of Town Council of 6th June, 1761, is of sufficient interest to merit quotation, and is to this effect :—“ The said Donald Ross, Dean of Guild, Represented That The Council house of this Burgh, and the two appartments therein are unsufficient by want of some panes of Glass & Standshill Irons, The first intended for Holding of Courts, & the other for Confining Prisoners for Debt, and Further That ther are no Prison which can be Called Wholesome within this Burgh for the Reception or Detention of Prisoners That may be Committed for Crimes such as Theft Receipt of Theft & murdure before conviction, and also Represented That The Causeway or Common Street of the said Burgh leading thereinto from the West, and a little to the Eastward of the Deans-house now possessee. by Mrs Jean Gordon is Dangerous for those who ride and much more so for Wheell Carriages and therefore Craved That the Councill wou'd provide a Remeid thereto as They shall think proper All which being Considered by the Councill present and flinding that what above Represented are Reall Grievances attending this Burgh They therefore for themselves & in name & behalf of the Community of the sd. Burgh ordain the Panes of Glass in the Town house and the other two Prisons for Debtors adjoining thereto to be furthwith Repaired with Glass & Stenchill joines to each of Such as are not sufficient . . . . and ffix and appoint The two Vaults in the Centre of the Vaults below the Town house to be used

as Publick Prisons within this Burgh from hencefurth and ordain the Keys of Each to be furthwith Delivered up to the Town Clerk to be given up by him to the Goalar for the Benefite of the Publick, and ordain the Inhabitants of this Burgh to make up and Repair that part of the High Way or Street leading into the Town from the West & adjacent to the Dean's house on or before the said Eighteenth of June Curr. and appoint Baillie Kenneth Sutherland, the said Donald Ross, Dean of Guild & the Town Clerk to oversee that part of the Causeway repaired."

On 24th June, 1763, the Town Council sent an address of congratulation to the King "on the happy Conclusion of the War, in which at your accession to the Throne of Your Ancestors you found these Kingdoms involved, a War which in its beginnings threatned Your Majestie's Collonies and the Dominions of Your Allies with so much Danger but which by the Divine Blessing on the Wisdom of Your Majesties Councils and the Bravery of Your troops has ended in a Peace not less Glorious than advantageous Safe & Honourable."<sup>19</sup>

Dornoch, like every other ancient burgh in Scotland, had its Guildry, though it is hardly ever mentioned in the old records of the town, those prior to 1729 having unfortunately disappeared. The only reference to the Guildry in those that are extant occurs in a minute of 7th August, 1750, which records that "in a Council Meeting of the Burgh, John Peterkine, Dean of Guild, Represented that he had out of the Guildry funds laid out the sum of



£2 14s 6d Sterling towards the carrying on the Council house, and therefore desired the Council might secure that sum for the Guildry, or allow him and his successors in office to possess and let out the three eastern vaults of the said Council House from this time forth until the Council can repay the above sum to the Guildry, Which being considered by the Council They Authorise the said John Peterkine and his successors in office to hold and possess the said three eastern vaults and let out the same to the best advantage for the behoof of the Guildry Until the above sum of £2 14s 6d Sterling be payed up by the Council for the time being to the Guildry."

To his quotation of this minute in his interesting monograph on "The Ancient Tolbooths of Dornoch," the late Mr H. M. Mackay appends the following note, which is well worth quoting:—"The only other official reference, so far as I know, to the Guildry occurs in connection with the Parish Church, in the Northern Transept of which certain rights are reserved to 'the Magistrates, Guildry, and Inhabitants of Dornoch.' Vide Heritors' Minutes, 30th October, 1788. Though records, however, are thus scanty, there is no doubt that 'Guilds,' or incorporations of the various trades, existed in Dornoch until well on in the present century, the members of which possessed the exclusive privilege of trading in the Burgh. The entrance of apprentices was jealously guarded. When an apprentice was admitted a full member, he was said to be 'brothered,' and these admissions usually

took place at the annual business meeting of the brethren of the Guilds. Each of these business meetings was invariably followed by a Ball. The Tailors, Shoemakers, and Carpenters were the three last survivors of these close corporations, and existed down until the thirties in this present century, when the various 'Brethren Balls,' as they were called, were great social functions in Dornoch. Old residents inform me that the 'Vrichts' (*i.e.*, Wrights or Carpenters) Ball was always considered the best."<sup>20</sup> Mr Mackay was writing in the nineteenth century. It is worthy of note that when General Sinclair of Rosline was made a burgess in 1741, he was also admitted a "Guild Brother of the Burgh." He was an ancestor of Duchess Millicent of Sutherland, and took a deep and active interest in the affairs of Dornoch.

Two incidents associated with the Tolbooth may here be recorded. The first occurred in 1731, and is described in a complaint made to the Sheriff by Hugh Sutherland, Messenger-at-Arms, against the Treasurer of the Burgh, whom he charged with a grave breach of law and order. It appears that legal proceedings had been instituted by Hugh Sutherland, Chirurgeon Apothecary, Dornoch, against Andrew MacCulloch, Treasurer, and the Messenger was charged with the duty of arresting that official. But the Treasurer, instead of quietly submitting to the authority of the law, deeply resented its enforcement upon his person, and, using abusive language towards its representative, he assaulted him with "a

ponderous iron key of the Tolbooth of Dornoch" which was in his hand. The assault is thus described by the Messenger in his complaint:—"And with the key struck me over the head and face . . . and, assisted by John Mackay, seized me by the hair of my head, forced me to the ground, kicking me."<sup>21</sup>

The other incident happened on Thursday, 26th October, 1737, the first night of St Barr's Fair. Hugh Calder, Merchant Burgess of Elgin, was charged before the Sheriff Depute with "being in company with others in the house of Janet Manson in Dornock, in the night time, they did, in a most violent and outrageous manner, assault, beat, and bruise each other, to the great effusion of their blood, and, upon their being carried to prison by the guard, did beat and abuse the said guard." He was found guilty and sent to prison, but, resenting the indignity thus put upon him, and his deprivation of so good an opportunity of doing business, he raised an action of damages in the Court of Session against the Sheriff-Depute and the Fiscal "not only for the pains contained in the laws against oppression, illegally committed for imprisoning a free liege in a pit or dungeon where thieves and malefactors are kept, but also for loss of market." The Sheriff-Depute, in his defence, made an interesting and ingenuous confession, when he stated that "he allowed the prison doors to be left open all the time Hugh Calder remained there, and everybody came freely out and in, and trafficked with him in the prison." The scene thus suggested must, indeed, have been an amusing one, though the

burgess of Elgin doubtless failed to appreciate the humour of it. As the Chapter House was at that time the criminal prison, it was within its ancient walls, where, in former days, the dignitaries of the Cathedral were wont to hold court, that Calder was privileged to hold his reception of the customers that sought his wares.

The old and somewhat ruinous chapter house must have been the prison in which Janet Horne, the Loth wench, and her deformed daughter were confined in 1727, from which, it is said, the younger woman escaped. The story of the old woman's trial for witchcraft and of her cruel death is told in a later chapter.<sup>22</sup> A few years must have wrought a wondrous change in the attitude of the legal authorities towards witchcraft, as in 1738 they ignored the popular belief that an old woman murdered near Dunrobin was a witch, and met her death when, in the guise of a hare, she was on some evil errand. She was found dead in her house, and had apparently been beaten to death by some such implement as a spade. Suspicion fell upon a Kirkton man named Donald Mackay, who had been repairing a road in the neighbourhood, and he was arrested and tried for murder before the Regality Court at Evelix. His plea that he had only wounded with his spade a hare that had suddenly crossed his path, not knowing it was a witch, was rejected by the Court, and, having found him guilty of murder, the Regality Bailie, solemnly extinguishing a lighted candle in accordance with the custom observed on such an

occasion, sentenced him to death. He was hanged on the Gallowhill at Dornoch on 26th May, 1738, and tradition relates that he danced at the foot of the gallows. His was the last execution at Dornoch.

During the first half of the eighteenth century the Burgh passed through a period of great financial depression, and the Town Council was mostly engaged in devising measures to enable them to meet their obligations. The ordinary sources of revenue failed to provide the necessary funds, and the customs had fallen to so low an ebb that, at a roup of them on one occasion, the sand-glass that regulated the period of sale had almost run out before a very low offer was made for them. The situation was so hopeless in 1744 that the Council thankfully accepted an offer from the Earl of Sutherland, who was Provost, to assume all their debts and obligations, on condition "that the Council would agree that he should be entitled to Draw the customes of the Burgh from henceforth annually as they should happen, Together with the arrears that presently appear to be due to the Town."

An effort had been made in 1739 to arrest the decay of trade in the Burgh by the appointment of another fair "to hold and Bear the name of Wemyss's Mercat," to be held yearly on the second Wednesday of June and to last for two days. It was so named after the Countess of Sutherland, who was a daughter of the Earl of Wemyss. This additional fair was founded to remedy "the many Disadvantages sus-

tained by the Inhabitants and Community of the Burgh through the want of an early summer mercat for buying, vending, and selling such goods, gear and commoditys as that season affords, and which cannot be had by them without going over countrys, and exposing themselves to hazards and expenses.”

As the correspondence given in a later chapter shows, Dornoch was the headquarters of the Earl of Loudon's force in the spring of 1746.<sup>23</sup> The duty of raising men in the county for his army was assigned to the Kirk Sessions of the various parishes. The contribution of Dornoch was 373 men, which showed that the Session's effort met with some measure of success. Mr Kirk was still minister, and his elders were Messrs Adam Mackay, John Hendry, and Bailie Andrew MacCulloch. Though the Session minutes of that time make no reference to the rebellion, a gap in the records extending from 10th February to 14th July is significant. An item in the Session Treasurer's accounts for 1746 is reminiscent of the occupation of Dornoch by the Jacobite forces; it occurs on the debit side as “Taken away by the Rebels . . . 15 shillings.” The money was probably taken from the Session box, and the theft doubtless accounts for the precautions taken by the Session at their meeting on 14th July, 1746, to prevent a repetition of it, when it was agreed by the Session “that their Strong Box having two Keys shall be kept Henceforth by the Moderator with one of the keys and the other key shall be kept by Baillie Andrew MacCulloch.”



The Session had already sustained a serious financial loss owing to the embezzlement of a great part of their funds by their own Clerk and Treasurer, Mr Alexander Sutherland, who had succeeded Mr Alexander Pope, the most careful and efficient of Session Clerks. He was the son of Mr Hector Pope, the last Episcopal incumbent at Loth, and a descendant of Mr William Pope, minister of Dornoch in the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> Pope was appointed to the combined offices of Schoolmaster, Session Clerk, and Precentor in 1730, and so painstaking was he in his discharge of the duties of the clerkship that he engrossed in the records the scroll minutes kept by his predecessors. His emoluments at Whitsunday, 1731, are given as £33 6s 8d, the amount of his yearly salary; £9 12s for his tuition of the poor scholars; £7 10s for transcribing the register—amounting in all to £50 8s 8d. The “poor scholars” were the sons of indigent citizens, for whose education the Session paid out of its funds. The number could not exceed five, and they enjoyed the distinction of having a special “loft” provided for them in the Cathedral. At a meeting on September 28th, 1730, the Session agreed to a proposal “to cause build a loft for the Scholars learning Latine allenarly about the Turnpike,” and Mr Pope was given “forty-four pds. Scots money for effectuating the said design.” In 1732 Mr Pope left Dornoch to complete his studies for the ministry, and in 1734 he became minister of Reay. According to Mr Sage, he was “an accomplished scholar, an intelligent antiquary, and was

intimately conversant with science.” He claimed kinship with the famous poet, his namesake, to whom he paid a visit on one occasion, when he was presented with a copy of the great man’s poems, which he treasured. After his departure from Dornoch there were frequent changes in the office of schoolmaster, and these, no doubt, were mainly due to the want of sufficient provision for the maintenance and encouragement of good teachers. During the ten years from 1737 to 1747 the headmastership of the Grammar School was held in succession by William Sutherland, Daniel Mackintosh, and James Cruickshanks, the last mentioned having resigned the headmastership of Elgin School for that of Dornoch. In addition to the Grammar School, there appears to have been “an English School,” which was taught by a mistress, who was paid six shillings Scots per quarter for each pupil. An item in the Treasurer’s accounts for 1738 is for £1 4s sterling “To  $\frac{1}{2}$  year’s dues for 2 poor Schollars at the Woman’s School.” In the Session accounts for 1739 there is another entry which shows that £1 Scots was paid “to Isabell Bain, Teacher of the poor Scholars.” The payment must have been for their education at the elementary school, as the yearly fee for each “poor scholar” at the Grammar School was £2 8s Scots per annum.

Reference is made in the Session minutes of 17th February, 1735, to a bursary known as “Mrs Mac-Lacky’s Burse,” the origin of which is unknown. It amounted to £15 16s yearly, and was held by a pupil attending the Grammar School. A Mr John David-

son of Whitehouse had the right of presentation on the recommendation of the Magistrates and Session. That it was intended for promising pupils in poor circumstances to enable them to further prosecute their studies is suggested by the representation made to the Session by Mr Sutherland, Schoolmaster, "that John Sutherland present Bursar on Mrs Mac-Lacky's Mortification, does not give due attendance and absents from the school without his Leave, and that further the said John Sutherland will attain to as much Learning as will capacitate him for ane employment against Whitsunday"; he suggests that the bursary be transferred to James Sutherland, second lawful son of Mr Andrew Sutherland, late minister of Latheron. The Session agreed to his proposal on the ground "that the said James Sutherland being an orphan has title to the said Bursary, as being the son of the said Mr Andrew who was born in this town, and as ane object of Charity being one of five children fatherless and motherless without due means of subsistence." It appears from the Session accounts for 1738 that a William Robertson was bursar that year.

The "Scholars' Loft" erected in 1730 had to be altered and enlarged in 1735 at a cost of £15 4s 2d Scots, "and whereas the said Seatt was taken down att the Desire and for the Convenience of the Magistrates," they were asked to pay half the sum expended. The idea of a loft must have caught the fancy of some of the heritors, as in 1732 space was assigned to Lord Strathnaver "on the east side of the

South Isle of the Kirk ” for the erection of a loft, with permission “ to strike out a door ” for entrance to his loft. Sir John Gordon of Embo and George Gray of Skibo were allowed to build lofts in the same transept, adjoining that of Lord Strathnaver, and to “ strike out a door to enter at to there loft or lofts.” The Session further ordained “ that all the little seats that are or may be an impediment to the putting up of the sd. seats be removed, Ay and while the said work be compleated.” It was suggested to the Session that opportunity should be taken, whilst John Ross, Square Wright, was building Sir John Gordon’s loft, to employ him also to build a Pulpit, Laterane, and Elders Seat.”<sup>25</sup> The Session regarded the proposal favourably, and at its next meeting “ Andrew MacCulloch reported he had agreed with John Ross, Square Wright, now employed in building a seat for Sir John Gordon and Skibo, to put up a pulpit of wainscot, Laterane and Elders Seat of fir for the summe of Six pds., Five Shillings Sterline money.” In this minute of Session reference is made to “ the Collector of the money for finishing the Steeple, pointing the Kirk and building a pulpit,” and its suggestion that a new spire was built about this time is confirmed by a receipt quoted in “ Old Dornoch ” for payment of £23 Scots from Skelbo estate “ for building the Church Steeple of Dornoch.” It is dated “ At Overskibo, 1728,” and is signed by Robert Gordon, “ Collector appointed by the Heritors of the Parish of Dornoch for ingathering the funds stented for building the steeple.”<sup>26</sup> John Gordon of Carrol,

as a Heritor, was assigned, for the erection of his seat, "the room that is before the Scholars loft consisting of seven foot square," with authority "to remove all the small stools or seats that are in that room or may in time coming untill he put up his seat"; two years later the widow of Bailie George Dunbar was given a space "opposite to the Church door on the South Side att the foot of the Turnpike"; Walter Ross, Writer, Dornoch, was allowed to erect a seat "in that place next to Mr Robert Kirk Minr. his seatt under the Magistrates Loft," while Bailie George McCulloch got permission to "build a Seatt opposite to the pulpit under the Schollars Loft." These extracts afford some faint idea of the internal arrangement of the church at that time, and also indicate that worshippers had to provide their own seats in the spaces allotted to them by the Session.

A dispute arose between the Heritors and the Kirk Session regarding the situation of the new pulpit, which had stood against the wall that shut off the ruinous nave. The Heritors wanted it moved further to the south, while the Session considered it was already too much to the south, "which makes it not central." Complaint had been made that Lord Strathnaver was "at a disadvantage as to his hearing and seeing the minister," but the Session attributed that to the fact that Embo's loft projected "3 or 4 feet more than it ought and will infallibly eclipse the foresaid Noble Lord's view of both Minister and People." It was further argued against the Heritors' contention that "the new pulpit stands in the very

place the old stood to which no objection was made," and that the removal of the pulpit would entail much labour and expense "by reason the frame is secured with iron bolts and molten lead in the side wall of the Kirk." The Session had their way, and the pulpit was allowed to occupy its former position. Below the pulpit stood the reader's desk, from which passages of Scripture were read to the people as they assembled for worship. The Session agreed in May, 1731, "to buy a large Kirk bible in order to have some person reading in Irish to the congregation before the Minister come to church, and that he prevent the Commons from running to Alehouses and the like, the said Reader whether he be the Session Clerk or an other to be rewarded for so doing." So anxious was the Session to put a stop to Sabbath drinking that, at their next meeting, two elders were appointed "*per vices*" to perustrate the Alehouses of this town in time of Divine Service to prevent Drinking and Sabbath proufaunation upon the said Day and at such Times. And the Magistrates of the Burgh order one of their Officers *per vices* also to concur with the forsd. Elders, and make Report." The Session insisted upon regular attendance at church, and those who could not give a satisfactory excuse for their absence from ordinances were made to stand before the congregation, and were rebuked by the minister. At a meeting of Session in 1729 "it was represented by a worthy member of the Session that there was no Stool of Repentance in this Kirk, and that there was much need of it." Robert Lithgow, wright, was





THE WITCH'S STONE



*Photo. by D. F. M'Leod*

THE MERCAT CROSS AND STOCKS



instructed to erect one "in the North Isle of the Church of Dornoch close by the West pillar, upon his own charges, but not above twenty two Shilling Sterl nor yet below that summe, and gilt (?) the same black, with this Inscription, This is the place of publick repentance." Such is the irony of fate that Lithgow was one of the first to satisfy discipline after the stool had been erected.

Immorality was rife in the parish notwithstanding strenuous efforts on the part of the Session to suppress it. Offenders had to satisfy discipline before the congregation and to pay fines varying from £5 to £20 Scots. The penalty in certain cases of special gravity was to stand in the Jougs at the church door on Sunday while the congregation assembled, and until the minister arrived. A Dornoch indweller, who had supplied so much drink to a party after divine service that they made a disturbance in his house, was subjected to the further indignity of having to wear "the pint stoup about his neck," while the iron collar of the jougs encircled it. All trace of this interesting old relic of the past has disappeared, but the stocks remain, though sadly decayed. They stood in the immediate neighbourhood of the old market cross. Though they must often have held offenders in durance vile, it is a remarkable fact that neither the burgh nor the Session records contain any reference to them. It was probably the civil courts that utilized them for the punishment of criminals. To assist the Session in their efforts to put down immorality and crime in the parish, "observers were appointed in

1746 whose duty was to “admonish any whom they might find guilty of any immoral practice condemned by the law of God and condescended on in the Act of Parliament and to delate the obstinate to this Session the first Monday of every quarter that they may be prosecuted in terms of law.” Those supervisors, described as “men of good repute and fair character,” fifty in number, were distributed over the various parts of the parish. The Magistrates of Dornoch and several gentlemen of good standing were also co-opted by the Session “to assist in judging of all matters submitted to them by the observers.” The supervision thus organised lasted for but a few years. The Session took cognisance of almost every crime and offence committed in the parish, and adjudicated upon cases of theft, defamation of character, assault, breaches of the peace, divination, bigamy, and unseemly behaviour. It was very jealous of its own dignity and reputation; any aspersion on the court or individual members of it was severely punished, whatever the position of the offender might be. A former Dean of Guild, who had dared to talk disrespectfully of the General Assembly, was sternly rebuked by the Session. A Dornoch shoemaker who “did in the most atheistical manner curse and imprecate” the Session Bailie had to satisfy discipline, pay a fine of £4 Scots, and he was “referred to the Civil Magistrates to punish him otherways as Law provides.” A Skelbo man, whose wife was satisfying discipline, pleaded guilty to having slandered the Session by declaring “that the

members had received from his wife's father Wedders, Hens and Eggs, so that they might favour his wife.' He had to stand in sackcloth before the congregation.

The Session had also to make provision for the poor of the parish, who numbered, on an average, forty persons. The money expended upon them was derived from the Church collections and the mortcloth dues. The collections ranged from £7-£20 yearly, those taken at the communion season, with its crowd of worshippers from all parts, amounting to a sum equal to that collected at the church door during the rest of the year. A great number of foreign and worthless coins found their way into the church plate, so much so that the Kirk Treasurer in 1731 complained of the "great many Raps and bad money he got in the Collections for the Poor." He asked that "good halfpence be allowed him for them by the Session," and he "presented in cumulo upon the table" raps for which the Session allowed him 8-10d stg. He was enjoined "to receive no more Raps," and the elders were charged "to have an eye upon such as shall give any Raps that their sinful and graceless behaviour may be duly rebuked." The obnoxious rap was a Swiss copper coin of the value of one-seventh of a penny, which has been immortalized in the familiar expression, "I don't care a rap."

The mortcloths were bequeathed in 1718 by Alex. Murray, Merchant, London, for behoof of the poor of the parish, and were used to cover coffins at funerals. Two were gifted, one of velvet and the

other of cloth, and the Session, finding "that they were contrived for a pall" and that "each of them will be two," they had them "made up in four for the better improvement of the same." Their use at funerals was compulsory, and while a charge of eight pounds Scots was made for the velvet mortcloths and twenty shillings Scots for the cloth ones, poor families had nothing to pay for the use of them. For their use outside the burgh a higher fee was charged on the ground that "they suffered more damage." The revenue derived from the hiring of the mortcloths was considerable and of great benefit to the poor, though payment of the dues was often delayed, and had to be enforced. They were let to Hugh McCulloch in 1733 for a period of seven years at a yearly rent of £3 stg., and in 1744 a new velvet mortcloth was purchased for £8 stg., and the fees were raised to £9 Scots for use outside and to £8 Scots for use inside the burgh. The money for the poor was distributed on the Monday of the Communion season, when the services held in church and on the links were attended by great numbers of people, many of whom came from the neighbouring parishes. Communion was celebrated twice a year, and on each occasion cups had to be hired from Golspie, which meant either that Dornoch had none, or that the cups available were insufficient for the occasion. In September, 1731, "Hugh Simson, Gunsmith in Dornoch, was appointed to make two hundred tokens for the use of this parish in time of Sacraments, which are to be marked D."'<sup>27</sup>



The Session carefully guarded the community against the intrusion of any undesirables who might come from other parts to settle in Dornoch, and a certificate of character had to be produced before any stranger was allowed to remain in the burgh. A minute of February 12th, 1723, records the fact that "Marjorie Sutherland servitrix to Rodk. Mackay having no testificate was ordered forthwith to procure a testificate from the Session of Tain in whose bounds she was last against their next meeting under the pain of being banished the place by the hand of the Hangman." N.B.—"The said Marjorie Sutherland goes under a very bad character." The Session Clerk's personal note is the prelude to an intimation in the next minute that "Marjorie Sutherland being denied a Testimonial from the Session of Tain was banished the place."

An almost invariable preliminary to marriage in those days was a formal contract, carefully drawn up and attested, which made provision for the payment of a fine should either of the parties fail to fulfil their obligation. In 1732 the Session ordered that marriage contracts should be inserted and signed in their records. Most of those engrossed are signed by the Session Clerk, the parties concerned touching the pen, as they could not write their names. In 1739 the Session, finding that the ordinary custom of contracting on Saturday night tended to the profanation of the Sabbath, enacted that all contracts must be drawn up in presence of the Session Clerk at Dornoch on some other day of the week. Any

breach of contract was investigated by the Session, and penalties were imposed upon those guilty of that offence. In one case recorded, an Evilix man pleaded poverty as his excuse for having resiled from his contract of marriage, but evidence was given which proved that "it was his Moyr. that Disswaded him and threatned to bestow her means upon others if he should Marry that woman." The Session "therefore ordered him to pay his forty pds. of penalty in the terms of his marriage and Charged him to be more Cautious in Time coming." In another case the woman was the resiling party, and "being interrogate why She broke her Marriage Bans answered She had not Affection for said McGrigor & will not Marry him, & said She was not able to pay the penalty." Another woman who broke her contract, and could give no satisfactory excuse, was remitted to "the Civill Judge." The Session evidently thought marriage was a good thing for evil-doers, and on one occasion, when a man who had incurred the severest censure of the Church begged for absolution on the plea that he was "in terms of marriage with an honest man's child," he was sharply rebuked by the Moderator, and ordered to set about marriage *quam primum* on pain of excommunication.

Excommunication was the extreme penalty imposed by the Church upon the obstinate and impenitent evildoer who defied her authority. It could be pronounced only by the Presbytery, and it was greatly dreaded because it involved being "shut

out from the communion of the faithful, debarred from their privileges and delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Any person under the ban of excommunication was regarded as lost, and shunned as accursed until the sentence was removed, as it sometimes was, when the Church courts were satisfied that the excommunicated person was truly penitent and willing to submit to their authority. One such case is recorded in the Session records of 1721, where it is stated that "George Newl an excommunicated person, being now in all human appearance on his death bed, and labouring under y<sup>e</sup> most loathsome and nauseous disease imaginable, in a most humbling manner" in presence of the Moderator and three elders, "earnestly with tears begged pardon of God for his sin and of the congregation of Dornoch for his Stumbling and great Offence to them, & especially of the Modr. for the bad treatment he had met with from him, Likewise beseeching to be relaxed from that heavy sentence under which he was that he might have the benefit of the prayers of all good Christians." The Session, after much consideration, granted his crave.

As an aid to Mr Kirk in his pastoral work, two Catechists were appointed in 1739 because of "the spaciousness of the parish and the number of catechisable persons which are such that any one person is not able to instruct them sufficiently." Their main duty was to teach parishioners the Shorter Catechism, "one in each end of the parish," and

“ they were to be paid four pounds, ten shillings Scots money in the half year.”

Food was scarce in the district during 1741, and in July of that year Mr William Sinclair, yr. of Dunbeath, brought a cargo of oats from Caithness, “ for the relief of the inhabitants in this the time of their Extream want.” He generously gave  $5\frac{1}{2}$  bolls of oats for the poor of the parish.

A gap in the Session minutes from August, 1741, until June, 1744, is explained by an entry made by Mr Daniel Mackintosh, Schoolmaster, on assuming the clerkship, which says that “ Here end the minutes of Session clerked by Mr Wm. Sutherland, all the minutes since that time being lost.” The minute of 29th January, 1750, includes an interesting reference to the condition of the church bell, regarding which it says: “ That non can ring or go near the Church Bell without a Ladder and some Dales laid upon the Balks. The Session considering that the Town of Dornoch is equally concerned with the Session to keep up sd. Bell in regard they draw payment for tolling it in time of burials, ringing the Eight Hour Bell and at five in the morning,” they invited the Town Council “ to concur with them in securing the Bell.” Three years previously the Session and Council had shared the expense of repairing the bell, which was “ out of the Frame and the Tongue fallen out.” The minute suggests that the stone stairway which gave access to the bell must have been in such a state of disrepair as to make it dangerous. But the chief interest of this minute lies in the fact that it corrects

an erroneous impression of long standing that Dornoch, unlike most Scotch burghs, had no curfew. It is good to know upon evidence so clear and incontrovertible that the Cathedral bell in bygone days tolled the knell of parting day and called the citizens of Dornoch to rest in the evening, while it also roused them from slumber to the day's toil in the early morning. And its note was heard, sounding in slow and solemn measure, when the dead were reverently carried to their last resting-place in the adjoining churchyard.

Such an occasion was the burial of the Countess of Sutherland, who died suddenly in 1747, during the absence of her husband at Bath, where he was taking the cure. His illness made it impossible for him to attend his wife's funeral, and this explains the letter which Gordon of Carrol wrote to the Earl on April 2nd, 1747:—"My Lord,—On Friday last the Countess of Sutherland's corps was interred at Dornoch with the greatest decency and good order that has been seen in this country. The corps was carried in a hearse, attended by thirty gentlemen and 200 commons, and 40 men of the parish of Golspy as a guard. There was not the least high word heard nor any man in disorder. Lord Duffus was principall mourner, and next him Ulbster who carried the feet. Thus was performed the last duty to the lady endowed with all the qualifications that could adorn her sex, and to the universal loss of everybody that had the honour of her acquaintance, and never enough to be regrated by every individual of this

county. It is the duty of every one to submit to the will of God, and blessed be his name that there is hopefull issue behind her." The "hopefull issue" to which Carrol refers comprised a son, William, who succeeded to the Earldom on his father's death at Montauban in 1750, and a daughter, Lady Betty, who afterwards married the Hon. James Wemyss of Wemyss, for a time Provost of Dornoch. One of the appendices to this volume is an interesting letter written at Skelbo by Lady Duffus to the Earl regarding his little daughter, to whom she had given the shelter of her home after the death of the Countess.<sup>28</sup>

The sanitation of the burgh in the eighteenth century was unspeakably bad, to judge from a minute of Town Council of date October 20th, 1736, which says that "The Baillies and Council Having taken to their Consideration the Great Inconveniencys that happen to the Inhabitants as well as Strangers by Middens lying on the Town Cawsay and highway and by the neglect of the Inhabitants in cleanzing the Streets before the Doors of their houses . . . . ordain That the Inhabitants Doe furthwith after Intimation made in common form to that effect Carry of and Remoov their Several Middens from of the highway and Likewayes once a week during the winter and Spring Seasons Cleanze the Cawsay and passages or Lanies before their houses and belonging to their possessions, With Certification if they failze herein That they and each of them Shall be Lyable to a ffyne of ten pounds Scots toties quoties to be payed to the ffisk of Court Besides the Tinsell of the Muck or ffulzie."



The sanitary condition of the burgh was not improved by the practice of allowing swine to roam about it at will, which created such a nuisance that in 1761 the minister, Mr Sutherland, sent in a complaint to the Town Council. It represented "That there are daily such Number of Swine kept within this Burgh and have access to the Churchyard, which is unfenced, and digg up the Graves and Bones of the Defuncts, which of itself is Shocking to Nature and Disconsonant to Good Policy." The Council having considered the complaint—"They Unanimously hereby Enact & appoint Intimation to be made upon Saturday the Eighteenth of Aprile instant through this Burgh by the Common Cryer thereof in the usuall way, Discharging the Inhabitants & Others from letting any Swine enter into the said Churchyard at any time or Season ffrom & after Teusday the Twenty-first instant with Certificatn. to such as shall not comply herewith That they shall be punished at the Discretion of the Magistrates of this Burgh, and any swine ffound in the said Churchyard from and after the forsaid day shall be Shot and given to the Poor of the Burgh or Parish of Dornoch without any payment, and for shooting of the said Swine The Council Nominate Appoint and Authorise William Ross alias McFfinlay in Dornoch to shoot such swine and Ordain him so to do upon Information as he shall be Answerable at his perill." The remedy proved ineffective, and, twenty years later, seven citizens were punished for keeping swine, and it was enacted by the Council "That any Sow or Swine that are from this date seen

to run loose through this Burgh or Limits thereof shall be Instantly Seised on by the officers of this burgh & Killed & Given off to the Poor within the Burgh, as also that the proprietor or proprietors of such sow shall be in virtue of this Act Instantly apprehended & Incarcerate within the Town House of Dornoch there to remain on his own proper charges for twenty four hours after the time of his Incarceration." Though the seven culprits had promised " Severally to Dismiss " their swine, the Council decided to " fine & Amerciate them in one Shylling each and ordain them to be Incarcerate within the Tolbooth of Dornoch untill payment." Later records, however, show that the swine nuisance persisted until the early part of the nineteenth century.

The Town Council passed a daring and drastic measure in 1783, which aroused such great resentment and strong opposition in the parish that it could not be enforced. It was an attempt to close the old churchyard against further burials, and to insist upon the use of a new bit of ground which had been acquired for the purpose. The minute recording the enactment says that " the Magistrates & Councill Considering that the present use or Custome of burying in the Centre of the Burgh & Covering with Grave Stones a great part of what should be the publick Marketplace & Change Is very Inconvenient & a Publick Nuisance, And that in order to remove & take away that Nuisance a very convenient Spot of Ground for a buriall place has been already marked out by the Heretors, Magistrates, & Councill in the

Links adjacent to the Burgh. They therefore Resolve that the said Spot of Ground marked out in the said Links shall in all time comeing from & after the period after exprest be the ground for burying all such persons as have been heretofore in use to be buried in the said Buriall place within the Burgh . . . . and ordain the whole grave stones to be removed by those concerned from the burying place within the burgh to the said new burying ground betwixt and the said first day of November next."

Much space is occupied in the Town Council records by the minutes of the meetings held at stated times in Dornoch for the election of a representative to Parliament for the burghs of Dingwall, Tain, Dornoch, Wick, and Kirkwall. The delegates appointed by these burghs to elect a Member of Parliament devoted the greater part of their meeting to an endeavour to prove the irregularity or illegality of their opponents' commissions, and their arguments are all duly recorded. On 28th May, 1741, Charles Erskine, Lord Advocate, was elected, but his election was declared null and void by the House of Commons; on 2nd April, 1742, the delegates again met at Dornoch and elected Mr Robert Craigie of Glendoig, His Majesty's Advocate. In 1774 Col. James Grant of Ballindalloch was returned in preference to Sir Adam Ferguson of Kilkerran, who was the other candidate. Objection was taken to the election of Col. Grant on the ground that "It is notorious in the Burgh that the most or all of the Members of the Town Council of the Burgh have been duely Enter-

tained with Meat and Drink & other provisions by the Late Member for the District of Burrows and who has again offered himself as a Candidate . . . . and have been kept in a Constant State of Dissipation and Riot and have been otherwise practised upon by Undue and Corrupt Influence." The objection was characterised by the Hon. James Wemyss of Wemyss, who, as Provost of Dornoch, presided, as "in every respect both mean and destitute of any foundation in truth."

In an address dated 29th April, 1789, the Town Council congratulated His Majesty the King "on the Happy event of his recovery from his late Dangerous indisposition," and in their address they referred to "the universal Dispondency during your Majestys illness and the universal Joy which your recovery has occasioned," which afforded "convincing proofis of your peoples veneration for your Virtues and of their Zealous attachment to your person and Government."

An interesting deed is engrossed in the burgh records, by which in 1803 a house and garden belonging to a sister of Sir John Gordon of Embo are conveyed to a Captain William Falconer. It was drawn up by Hugh McCulloch, Town Clerk, who in his attestation of the deed styles himself "Clerk of the Diocese of Caithness," a designation one hardly expects to find in a legal document of the nineteenth century. His attestation may have been copied from an old deed of the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The document sheds an interesting light upon the quaint procedure which obtained at a transference of

property in Dornoch at that time. It describes how “George Jaffery Baillie foresaid by Virtue of the office of Bailiary thereby committed to him gave and delivered heretable State & Sasine real, actual & Corporal possession to the said Capt. William Falconer of all and whole the foresaid House & Garden & that by Delivering to him of Earth & Stone of the ground of the said Garden & hasp & Staple of the principal Door of said House . . . . with other Symbols requisite at & upon the ground of the same . . . . These things were so said & done within the House & on the ground of the Garden before mentioned ’twixt the hours of two & three o’clock in the afternoon.”

Earl Gower was Provost in 1787 when the Council opposed the proposed union of King’s College and Marischal College in Aberdeen. It was agreed that their decision should be published in the *Edinburgh Courant* and *Caledonian Mercury*.

A letter written on 16th July, 1747, by a Mr John Gray to his kinsman in Edinburgh gives a description of a naval fight in the Dornoch Firth. “Now,” he writes, “I must give you ane account of a sea fight that hapened this day and yesterday in this furth, which for ane hour yesterday was very diverting. Ane Englis 20 gun ship, Captain Farmer, commander, called the Experiment, ran in here a small French privateer. The 20 gun ship could not follow further than Achinchanter be east Dornoch, and the privateer came up ’twixt Dornoch and Taine. There was a Leith merchant ship of 10 small guns with the 20 gun

ship, which they maned with 40 marains and cam to the privatier. They fought for a whol houre, and wee who stood on the point of Dornoch, gave it in favours of the Frenchman. However, he made the best of his way up till he cam to Spensodal, where he now lys, and finding he could not get out he surrendered upon terms.”<sup>29</sup>

In that same year the quiet of Dornoch Cathedral during service was disturbed by an incident for which Mr John Gordon, Chirurgeon, in Dornoch, was responsible, and for which he had to answer to the Kirk Session. He appeared before that court and “acknowledged with great weight on his spirit his being hurried by temptation to give offence to the congregation by removeing an unruly child out of a seat which he looked upon as his Pupils property and the boy making a noise when put out of the seat by him occasioned the offence to the congregation for which he expressed his grief and sorrow.” The doctor was publickly rebuked and fined one guinea.

Some idea may be gained of the character and capacity of the better class of house in Dornoch during the eighteenth century from the minute of a Presbyterial visitation of the Manse in 1753. Mr Kirk had complained of its ruinous condition, and the tradesmen present recommended that the “walls and gavels be partly harled and plaistered within, that the partition of the laigh west room be removed westward to make the cellar larger, and a window opened in the back wall to give more light to the cellar. The laigh east room was to be floored with deals; the first



and second loft and garret stair to be repaired with new deals; two skylights to be put into the garret, and the Roof to be covered with heather and clay above the divots." A porch was to be erected at the outer door, which was "much exposed to the winds that blow from the sea." The Manse thus appears to have been a thatched house of two stories with attics, having two rooms and a cellar on the ground floor, with two bedrooms and a closet above, and two attics under the roof.

After a faithful ministry of over forty years in Dornoch, the Rev. Robert Kirk passed to his rest on 27th February, 1758. Noted for his piety, diligence, and zeal, he has been described as "a Nathanael indeed in whom was no guile." During his long residence in Dornoch he seems to have acquired some property in the burgh, including the greater part of Bishopfield, which his daughter inherited. Miss Ann Kirk and Capt. George Munro of Culcairn, her nephew, were served heirs to the deceased Robert Kirk on 12th January, 1803.<sup>30</sup>

Within a year after Mr Kirk's death—on 22nd February, 1759—the Rev. John Sutherland, A.M., minister of Kilmallie, was inducted to Dornoch, with which, as a member of the old family of Torboll, he already had a connection. He was noted for his great physical strength, and to him tradition assigns the credit of having first introduced potatoes into the district, as Mr H. M. Mackay relates in his *Old Dornoch*.<sup>31</sup> Mr Andrew Fraser was headmaster of the Grammar School during the earlier years of Mr

Sutherland's ministry, and it was during his tenure of office that the Town Council passed an important resolution regarding school fees, which they introduced with a view to making better provision for the teacher. The minute of April, 1766, bears that the Council "taking to consideration that hitherto there has not been any school fees or dues for teaching the different Branches of Education made, for remedying wherof and for the encouraging of a proper and fit schoolmaster within the said Burgh and Parish . . . unanimously Agreed that there shall be paid quarterly to the schoolmaster of the said Burgh for the time being according to the several Branches of Education he shall teach the sums following, viz. :—for teaching English in the new method Two Shillings Stg.; for teaching English and Writing two shillings and sixpence, stg.; for teaching English and Arithmetic and Writing Two Shillings and Sixpence Stg.; for teaching Latin and Writing Two Shillings and Sixpence Stg. money." Authority was given to Mr Andrew Fraser and his successors to exact these fees "until this Act of Council shall be repealed." Mr James Duncan succeeded Mr Fraser as schoolmaster, and, after holding that office for a few years, he entered the ministry.

Representation was made to the Presbytery in 1769 by the Rev. John Sutherland "that his church was so ruinous that unless it was repaired he and his congregation would have to desert it." The tradesmen present at the Presbytery's visitation reported, after examination of the church, that "it was capable

of repair, that the walls would have to be pinned and harled and the tops of the gavels taken down to a certain length and that a new roof was necessary." The cost they estimated at £322 15s 6d. Proceedings were sisted at the instance of the Hon. George Mackay of Skibo, who proposed that plans should be got from an Edinburgh architect for the erection of a new church. The minister deprecated any delay owing to "the danger there was from the heavy grey slates on the most crazy part of the roof both to persons in Church and others without going past that way." Mr Mackay undertook to have the slates removed, and his proposal for delay was accepted. The final decision was to repair the church; but a year passed without any progress having been made, and not until 1772 was the work begun. The financial burden it imposed upon the heritors was greatly eased by a grant of £300 obtained from the Exchequer in 1775.

Nothing had evidently been done to improve the Manse when Mr Sutherland came to Dornoch, and in 1774 he made a grievous complaint to the Presbytery of "the Hardships to which he and his family had been exposed by the ruinous state of the Manse for many years." It was so bad that the tradesmen ordered by the Presbytery to inspect it were of one mind that it was beyond repair, and, after some difficulty with the heritors, a new Manse was erected in 1775. Some light is shed by a Presbytery minute of that year upon the inadequacy of the accommodation the Manses of that time provided, and the information it

conveys is of interest as affording an indication of the type of house which was thought at that time to be sufficient and suitable for a professional man occupying the position of parish minister. "The Presbytery found that the Ministers' families in the parishes are greatly straitened for accommodation in regard they have no kitchen or cellar, as the room in the Manse intended for a kitchen is absolutely necessary for the accommodation of the family otherwise & the small closet intended for a cellar does not at all answer that purpose." The Presbytery asked the heritors to agree "to have an outer cellar and kitchen added to the plan, & to floor the Room in the Manse that was intended for a kitchen & to finish the two Rooms in the Manse that are not combceiled." Incidentally it emerges in the minute that Mr Sutherland's stipend was £70 a year, truly a miserable pittance for the minister of the Cathedral that Bishop Gilbert had so richly endowed. His great strength must have been undermined by the hardship and worry incidental to his ministration in a dilapidated church, his residence in a miserable hovel, and the maintenance of his family on a beggarly stipend; for he died in 1777 at the early age of forty-seven. His wife was a daughter of Sir John Gordon of Embo.

Owing to the failure of the harvest all over Scotland in 1751, that year was one of great distress in Sutherland, as in other parts of the country. Famine threatened the tenants on the Sutherland estate, and for their relief great quantities of grain had to be imported. The holders of land were much behind

with their rent, and a representation was made by those in Dornoch and other parishes to the estate Commissioners setting forth their destitute circumstances, and declaring that they should be reduced to penury, unless time were allowed them for the payment of their arrears. The Commissioners were sympathetic, and supplied them with seed corn at £7 Scots per boll, a considerable reduction on the current price. At the same time they restricted the price of the victual arrear to about eight marks per boll.

In 1751 the Town Council of Dornoch elected the young Earl of Sutherland—the last of the Earls—to the Provostship in succession to his father. On attaining his majority and assuming the management of his affairs in 1756, he inaugurated his administration by an act of humanity, which deserves to be recorded. John Sutherland of Rearquhar, an old man of over seventy-five, had been imprisoned for arrears of rent by the factor for the Skelbo estate, who refused to release him, though security was offered for payment of the debt. When this act of gross oppression came to the knowledge of the young Earl, he at once paid the old man's arrears, and secured his freedom. The Earl's agent in a letter of that date to Mr Gilchrist, his factor, says:—"I am very glad that Lord Sutherland's first step of business in the country should begin with an act of humanity and compassion." It was characteristic of him, and it won him the hearts of his people. His marriage in 1761 to Mary Maxwell, elder daughter of the Laird of Preston, was one of true affection and unalloyed



happiness.<sup>32</sup> It ended, however, in tragedy, for in 1766 they both died within a few days of each other at Bath, where they had gone for the Earl's health. There he contracted a fever, and his devoted wife nursed him with such unremitting assiduity that, catching the infection when her physical resources were exhausted, she died on 1st June, after only a few days' illness, leaving a little daughter just thirteen months old. Arrangements were made for the interment of the Countess in Dornoch Cathedral. The body was to lie for some days at Cyderhall in a room hung with black: in addition to the friends of the family and the county gentlemen, four hundred tenants were to precede the hearse to the church, the doors of which were to be painted black, while the pulpit and the Magistrates' pew were to be covered with black cloth: about a dozen flambeaux were to be used at the tomb during the interment. All these arrangements, however, were cancelled when the Earl died on 16th June, and husband and wife were both laid to rest in Holyrood Abbey.

The succession of their infant daughter to the title and estates was disputed, and formed the subject of a prolonged litigation, which ended in her favour in 1771. The young Countess was given the best education possible, and early displayed a decided aptitude for English literature, of which she was very fond.<sup>33</sup> Her early childhood was spent in Edinburgh under the care of Lady Alva, her maternal grandmother; but at the age of seventeen she paid a visit to Dunrobin, and her curators' accounts contain the





ELIZABETH, COUNTESS OF SUTHERLAND

From the Portrait by George Romney  
By permission of Mr G. T. Bazguley, Newcastle



following entry :—" By paid the countess's travelling expenses to and from Sutherland, including carriages, horses, etc.—£191 12s 2d. By cash laid out by her ladyship during her journey—£25 12s 6d." Thenceforward she displayed an active interest in the management of her estates, and her kindly disposition brought her many appeals for assistance from those who sought her influence for the furtherance of some proposal they had submitted to her curators.

One of those applicants for her favour was the Rev. John Bethune, who had been translated from Harris to Dornoch in 1778 to fill the vacancy created by the death of Mr Sutherland. The pitiable condition of the ruined nave of the Cathedral at that time may be gathered from a reference in a sasine of 1786 to " ane midden within the west aisle of the Broken Kirk of Dornoch." In his appeal to the Countess, Mr Bethune enlarged upon the " incompetency " of the Cathedral for public worship, " being so vastly spacious, lofty and irregular as greatly to exceed the utmost exertion of any human voice." He complained of the persistent adherence by many people of the better sort to the old and unpleasant practice of burying their dead in the church, which was thereby rendered " nauseous and unhealthful." He closed his appeal with the hope " that it might not be considered unworthy of the countess to take the lead in a matter of such public utility and concern to her country and the burgh of Dornoch." Mr Bethune's graphic description of the lamentable condition of his church made little impression upon

the curators, when it was submitted to them. They replied that "they could not understand how a church that had been used for preaching since the reformation should all of a sudden have become useless to the hearers," and suggested that the regular way for the minister to proceed in this matter was by an application to the Presbytery, which might be followed by a meeting of heritors at which they should also consider the propriety of enclosing the churchyard." The minister's representation to the Presbytery led to certain improvements, including the raising of the floor to a higher level, seven feet above the original one, the erection of a new pulpit and the provision of pews for the worshippers.

Mr Bethune's petition to the Presbytery on 28th August, 1782, which moved that court to insist upon the improvements he craved, sets forth "that the petitioner and his parishioners have long laboured under great hardship from the incompetence of their parish Church for the purposes of publick worship. That the vast extent, stupendous height & irregular figure of it render it impossible for the strongest voice to extend to the remoter parts. That a considerable part of the congregation are thus precluded from the benefit of publick instruction on the Lord's day; even while the petitioner, who is not deficient in an audible voice, is in vain straining it to the utmost, to the great distress of his person & with sensible prejudice to his health. That, notwithstanding the enormous spaciousness of the Kirk, numbers of ffamilys, who have several miles to travel to the place of worship,

are unprovided of seats. That this inconvenience arises, not from any unwillingness on their part to build or purchase seats, but from the scarcity of them, owing to the practice of burying within the Church, which occasions the frequent removal of seats; which are therefore in place of being compactly connected, detached from each other & so occupy much unnecessary room." The cost of floor, pulpit, and seats amounted to £262 10s, and when a heritor's representative took exception to such an expenditure so soon after that incurred in 1773, Mr Bethune, in reply, pointed out that "the whole sum expended by the Heretors at that time did not exceed a hundred and fifteen pounds ten shillings sterling in regard that what was further necessary for the work done at that time was obtained as a donation from the Exchequer." Mr Bethune had also suggested the desirability of "Coom Ceiling as well as lofting the Cathedral," and had drawn the attention of the heritors to "the shocking state of the Kirkyard, which is at present without the least appearance of a fence & makes a part not only of the market place, but of the common high road." He did not, however, insist upon the removal of these grievances at that time. They were all to be removed in after years by the generosity of the noble lady whose kindly interest he had enlisted by his appeal.

The young Countess was married to Lord Gower on 4th September, 1785, and in August, 1786, she visited Rome with her husband, where they saw Prince Charles Edward Stuart, who was then a

broken-down old man. Earl Gower's appointment in 1790 as British Ambassador to France brought him and his lady into close touch with the stirring events of the French Revolution, and Marie Antoinette wore clothes provided by the Countess, when, with her family, she made her unsuccessful attempt to escape in 1791. The French Republic's declaration of war against Britain in 1792 created such alarm in the country that fencible regiments had to be raised, and the Sutherland Fencibles, disbanded in 1783, were revived. They afterwards came to be merged in the regular army as the 93rd Sutherland Highlanders, a regiment of glorious traditions and undying fame.



SEAL OF THE BURGH



## CHAPTER VIII

## THE 'FORTY-FIVE

DORNOCH, notwithstanding its remote situation, played its own part in the stirring events of the 'Forty-five, and contributed its own share towards the suppression of the rising in favour of Prince Charles Edward Stewart. In a letter, dated August 5th, 1745, the Lord Advocate informed the Earl of Sutherland of the Prince's intention of landing in Scotland, and requested him to use his influence in the north "for the safety of the government and for the preservation of the public peace."<sup>1</sup> The Earl had already received private information regarding the Prince's intention, which he had communicated to the Duke of Argyll. He was of opinion that the Jacobite cause would receive great support throughout the country, and he deplored the scarcity of arms and ammunition, to remedy which he requested that at least sixteen hundred swords and guns should be sent to him at once by a sloop. He also advised the appointment of a lord lieutenant of the northern shires, and gave the assurance "that if I am honoured with that commission I shall take the utmost care to fulfil it with equal zeal and fidelity, as my grandfather did in the time of the former rebellion."<sup>2</sup> The Earl and Lord Reay had agreed to raise a force of about two thousand men, and, with that object in view, the Earl wrote letters to the parish ministers throughout the county, in which

he asked them to furnish him with lists of the men in their several parishes from sixteen to sixty who were capable of bearing arms. Dornoch's quota of 373 men exceeded that of any other parish in the county. The Earl assured the men at their first muster that all arrears of rent would be cancelled, and that he would be responsible for the care of their families in the event of their being killed or disabled on active service. Lord Reay announced his intention of sending about one hundred and forty men without arms to the gathering at Dornoch; but he was evidently concerned as to their maintenance there, for he wrote:—"How to get provisions to our men when they meet in Dornoch is to me a great strait."<sup>3</sup> The Earl and he had been asked to send men to join Cope's army, and the Earl offered Sir John and also President Forbes to send two hundred men at once to Inverness.

The Earl of Loudoun who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the King's forces in the North of Scotland, reached Inverness on 9th October, and from there he wrote several letters to the Earl, in one of which he compliments him on the men from Sutherland, regarding whom he writes that "they and there officers will do credit to the country they come from." His testimony was confirmed by Mr Patrick Gray in a letter he wrote to the Earl, where he says that "there was none at Inverness that came within sight of them; the very cadies on the street was whispering to one another that the Sutherland men had affronted all the rest except the Macleods. They were very well clad, and mostly gentlemen's children." Lord

President Forbes wrote to congratulate the Earl upon the fact that, notwithstanding the difficulty of the route, they had arrived earlier than any other company, except Ross of Culcairn's, which had only a short distance to come.<sup>4</sup> The Sutherland company was commanded by Captain Mackay, and consisted of one hundred and fifty men and a piper. Their equipment presented some difficulty, and the President had suggested that, as there were only guns and bayonets available for them, they should beg or borrow broadswords until a supply could be brought from the south. At the President's request they had been sent to Tain, whence they had been conveyed by sea to Inverness. Their fine appearance led to a request that a second company should be raised, and this was done without delay; but this other company, under the command of Captain Sutherland, did not create so favourable an impression, as many of the men were poorly clad. Desertions were frequent, and in the month of November Lord Loudoun sent two men "to Dornich market to pick up some men of Captain Alexander Mackay's company who were still in that part of the country." After taking the oath of attestation, they seem to have taken another "never to serve against the Pretender or his airs," and Loudoun's messengers were sent to persuade them to return to duty, on the understanding that they would not be punished if they did so. In December he complains of "a very great number of men having deserted, and of a great many of Captain Sutherland's being in danger of doing the same at a time when they are wanted very much."

He expressed the hope that the Earl of Sutherland would devise some method "to remedy this without loss of time." The Earl punished some of the deserters by confining them in a dungeon, but with little effect. Their officers experienced great difficulty in keeping the men together, so eager were they to return to their homes. While at Inverness they took part in some military expeditions against the Frasers, and in one of these Lord Lovat was captured.

President Forbes, on 31st January, 1746, wrote again to the Earl asking for more men, and informing him that he was expecting a ship with a supply of arms.<sup>5</sup> He begged him "to pitch upon a couple of hundred cleaver fellows to be brought together in the form of militia as soon as the arms expected come." The Earl replied that he would have the men ready at a moment's notice, and that he would lead them in person. In February the President reported that the Prince was said to be marching northward, and, as he wished the loyal forces to concentrate upon Inverness in order to frustrate the rebel army's design, he suggested that the Earl should despatch as large a company as he could muster by way of Tain towards Inverbreaky. He advised the Earl not to accompany them, owing to the state of his health and the severity of the weather, but he added that "if he must lead in order to bring them out," he should accompany them but a short part of the way, and hand over his command to other leaders. The Earl, however, adhered to his original intention, and wrote the President from Tain on 15th February to say that he

was on his way to Cromarty with four hundred men, and that he expected to find arms for them there. In this he was disappointed, and in a letter he wrote from Tain five days later he says :—" I shall only add that I marched to Cromarty with 400 men, when I made not the least doubt but that I was to have received arms and ammunition for them; and as I have kept them at my own expence, I should be very glad to know what rout I am to take with them, that I may order their provisions accordingly."

Lord Loudoun had, however, to abandon Inverness owing to the approach of the Jacobite army, as his force was not strong enough to oppose it. He crossed Kessock Ferry into Ross-shire, and on 21st February he wrote the Earl from Balnagown, asking him " to be so good as order over immediately all the boats from Sutherland to the ferrie near Tain, and put a guard of your people over them."<sup>6</sup> Next day, in answer to a letter from the Earl, he wrote to say that the boats ought certainly to be at the Meikle Ferry, though he saw no " use of crossing at presant." He intimated the arriva<sup>l</sup> of the vessels carrying the much-needed arms, and he asked that three hundred of the Sutherland men should be sent to the boat-house there to receive them. But later that day, on account of information he had received regarding the movements of the rebels, he resolved to cross the ferry next forenoon. He intimated his intention to the Earl, and asked him to have all his own men across before his force reached the ferry, " that there may be no stope from your people delaying in the morning, which

might prove unlucke for the rear if the enemy should advance quick." Loudoun's army accordingly crossed Meikle Ferry on the forenoon of the 23rd February and marched to Dornoch, which he made his headquarters, and where he remained for several weeks. Loudoun's hurried retreat into Sutherland was due to the advance of a detachment of rebels under the command of the Earl of Cromartie, which had been commissioned to disperse Loudoun's force, and, for this purpose, had been augmented by some of the best Jacobite troops under Lord George Murray. On hearing that Loudoun was at Dornoch, Lord George returned to Inverness, after sending notice of the disposition of his forces to Lord Cromartie, and informing him that the Duke of Perth would take command.<sup>7</sup>

Lord President Forbes accompanied Loudoun to Dornoch, and during his stay in that neighbourhood he made the house of Overskibo his residence. Two letters which he wrote from there to the Earl of Sutherland are preserved at Dunrobin. In one of them, which is dated 25th February, 1746, he thanks the Earl for his invitation to Dunrobin, "to so good company and so good quarters"; but he excuses himself on the ground that duty did not permit his acceptance of the Earl's hospitality. He had "to remain in the neighbourhood of the army for some time to give the best directions he could." His second letter, written the day following, was in reply to one from the Earl, informing him that he had heard that the Earl of Cromartie, at the head of a force that num-



bered two or three thousand, was threatening to invade the county by an attack from the west. The President's reply showed how little importance he attached to such reports. "We are daily alarmed," he wrote, "with storys from the west of armies coming to invade us. To-day morning we had the same allarum that has been transmitted to your Lordship, with notice that the rebels were to be this day at Tain; but that did not hinder Lord Loudoun to send over a detachment of 150 men to Tain, who about noon made proclamation at the cross. . . . This proclamation was duly made, and the detachment returned without hearing any more about the rebels except the common report that they were coming." The Lord President, however, did not think that "the Prince could spare so many hands from the work he was about."<sup>8</sup> After events proved that the President had under-estimated the importance the Jacobite leaders attached to the dispersal of Loudoun's army, upon which they were resolved. Arrangements were made for the assembling of fishing boats at Findhorn, which were afterwards conveyed by night to Tain, where Cromartie's force was quartered. Though Cromartie was opposed to the scheme of crossing the ferry in pursuit of Loudoun, the Prince and his advisers were resolved to make the attempt. Loudoun probably thought that he was safe from attack by way of the ferry, though he kept a guard posted there to watch the movements of the enemy. The men composing the guard appear to have held communications with Cromartie's men on the other side of the ferry,

as the Duke of Perth in a letter to Lord Cromartie tells him "that severals of them have cried over to our men that severals of them would come over to us if they could, but that the oars are shut up; which makes me writ that you may bring as many spare oars as possible, in case we should get the boats of the ennemy without finding their oars."<sup>9</sup> The Sutherland men had also begged for meal, as they had nothing but rye. Information may have reached Cromartie in this way which gave him a better idea of Loudoun's movements than Loudoun had of his. It would appear from the following correspondence, which Loudoun carried on with the Earl of Sutherland from Dornoch, that, though he knew something of the doings of the rebels, he was ignorant of the plans and preparations they had made for the crossing of the Meikle Ferry, which they accomplished on 20th March, under cover of a dense fog which concealed their movements.

Loudoun's letters to Sutherland from Dornoch are preserved at Dunrobin, and are of sufficient historical interest to merit quotation:—

I

"Dornich, February 24th, 1746.

"My Lord, I find this morning that part of the arms which should have been for the men that were to have marcht this day to the hight of the country with all the amonition are by mistake caryed to Dunrobin, for which reason I have delivered the ten chistes of arms I had hear to your officers, with a chist of cartrages, that there may be no delay, and I must now beg that your lordship, as you agreed last night, will

give orders to that forth company at Golspie to march immediatly to the passes on the Shin with their arms and amonition, that we may have it defended past a possability of the enemyes forsing it, and that it may appear on this, as it has done on all occasions, that your lordship has taken arms for the publick service, and that every one of them are imployed that way. My complements to my lady. I ever am, my dear lord, your lordships most humble servant,

“LOUDOUN.”

## II

“Dornich, February 28th, 1746.

“My Lord,—I met with Captain Gray hear last night, and showed him your lordship’s letter, and he immediately dispatched an express to the four companeyes on the Shin with orders to march. I have mett since with Gavesane, and acquainted him with your lordships orders, and he has agreed very readily to deliver over as many men as he has, in order to compleat the four companeyes so far; and as they are now match ’tis impossible for the officers to make them up. But if your lordship will be so good as order any of your people to send them after us, I shall take care that they have credit for them according as they join there companeyes.

“I beg your lordship will be so good as make my complements acceptable to my Lady Sutherland, and my love to my wife, and my complements to the major.

“I ever am, with great esteem and regard, my lord, your lordships most obedient humble servant,

“LOUDOUN.”

## III

“Dornoch, 10 March, 1746.

“My Lord,—I was honourd with a letter from the Duke of Cumberland, dated at Aberdeen the 7th instant, informing me that he woud be as this night at Bamf with his army in his way to Inverness; and as he has given no particular orders I can onlie acquaint your Lordship that his armie consists of seventeen battalions and four regiments of cavalry; that there are three more regiments of foot following, and all in top spirits. As I’m informed a body of the rebels not verry considerable are soon to be at Tain, I must beg and insist that your Lordship woud order all the boats that are upon the Sutherland coast forthwith to repair to the Mickle Ferrie, that so I may be able at once to transport a force strong enough to put a check to their depredations; and if any partie be requisite to carry your orders into execution, I beg youll immediately let me know, and they shall be forthwith sent.

“Please make offer of my compliments to my Lady Sutherland, to my little wife, and to Major McKay. I am, with great esteem, my lord, your lordship’s most obedient, most humble servant,

“LOUDOUN.

“I ask pardon for using an other hand. I have had so much writting today that I am almost blind.”

## IV

“Dornick, March 11th, 174[6].

“My Lord,—I had this day the honour of your lordships along with Bain, whom I have examined and kept prisoner. I have several informations against

him. I am very much obliged to your lordship for the boats you have ordered to the ferry. They are absolutely nessessary for the publick service. If there are any more of any sise beyond your lordships house I should be glade to have them, as I have certain accounts that the rebells advansed last night as far as Alnus. I must fall on methods to be provided with such a number of boats as will transport a body at once as may be able to land in spite of them; and as soon as I am master of those, I hope to make them very sick of their project on East Ross; for they must ether abandon there scame of fighting the Duke in Murray, or they cannot spare men enough to deal with the troopes hear.

“ I beg your lordship will make my compliments acceptable to my Lady Sutherland and the major, and give my love to my little wife, and tell her I beg she will remember that a man that neglects his duty never yet was prised by the women, and that when I went farder to see others the enemy were a hundered milles from me, and now they are at my noss ready to take every advantage of my negligence, and layable to give me an opportunity of paying them my compliments. I am, with great regard and esteem, my lord, your lordships most obedient and most humble servant,

“ LOUDOUN.”

## V

“ Dornick, March 15th, 174[6].

“ My Lord,—As the weather has hitherto prevented the boats your lordship was so good as to order for me to come to the Mickle Ferry, I find it nessessary

to give your lordship this trouble to acquaint you that I have certain intelligence last night that Lord Cromarty has formed a scame to surprise them in the night with a party to be sent in some boats, which the man of war ordered round to me from Cromarty, and have remained between that and Tarbatness. There are but two or three of those boats at most; but if your lordships should fall into there hands it will put them into a condission to be very troublous both to your lordship and us. Therefore I beg no time may be lost in sending them round to me, as 'tis of the utmost consequence for his Majestyes service.

“I can give your lordship no certain accounts of the rebells numbers, as they come to me so very different from different places, where I can have no suspition of the intensions of the people who send the intelligence, they march and countermarch so, and intermix there people to such a degree that 'tis very difficult to count them. But I hope I have now fahn on a method which will bring me a certainty of there numbers. I shall now take up no more of your lordships time, but to beg that you will make my compliments to my Lady Sutherland, and my dear unfaithfull wife, and to the major. I ever am, with great truth and friendship, my lord, your lordships most obedient humble servant,

“LOUDOUN.”

## VI

“Dornich, March 19th, 174[6].

“My Lord,—I had yesterday the honour of a letter from your lordship, which was delivered to me near Lairg, with a sight of some intelligence your



Lordship had had from Caitness, which I think deserves particular attention, and I shall have it in my thoughts, as soon as my hands are a littel loss, with your lordships advise to put a stope to it. I expect, as soon as the wind will permit, a man of war in the Firth, with whom I shall consult what can be done by them, and acquaint Comodar Smith with the situation of that part of the country.

I have just now the honour of an other letter from your lordship, which supprised me very much, in relation to arms and amonition to defend your house, which your lordship sayes you have frequently applied for without success. I dont know by what accident those letters have miscaryed; for I do declare, from all those I had the honour to receve I never understood the least application of that sort, and that I might not be mistaken I have lookt them over again just now. Your lordship indeed, in the first of yours of the 15th, mentions armes wanted by the new companyes, which I am ready to answer now, as I yesterday took there numbers, and the demand will be very small, as till now I alwayes reconed on those arms you aquainted me you had taken from the desarters. But as for the defence of your house, my lord, till now I never knew your lordship wanted; and as soon as you will acquaint me with what numbers of armes and what quantity of amonition will be sufficient for your lordships use (but that particular demand is nesessary for my voitcher and justification for disposing of his Majestyes stores put into my hands); and I do assure your lordship I will with pleasure do all my powers

will allow me; and now must beg that your lordship will make my compliments acceptable to my Lady Sutherland, and the young lady and the major, and that your lordship will believe me to be, with great esteem and regard, my lord, your lordships most obedient humble servant,

“LOUDOUN.”

The last of those letters, written on the eve of the descent of the Jacobite forces upon Dornoch, shows clearly that Loudoun was quite unconscious of the danger that threatened him. Completely taken by surprise, he made no effort to oppose the advance of the enemy after they had crossed the ferry. On their way to Dornoch they dispersed a body of two hundred men belonging to Loudoun's army, and captured Major Mackenzie—who commanded them—along with several officers and sixty privates.<sup>10</sup> The main body under Loudoun hurriedly abandoned Dornoch and beat a hasty retreat to the west, pursued by the rebels. The Duke of Perth gave up the pursuit at the head of Loch Shin, while Loudoun, accompanied by President Forbes and part of his army, eventually made his way to Skye. The Sutherland militia took refuge in the neighbouring hills, while the Earl narrowly escaped capture by a party of rebels, three hundred in number, who arrived at Dunrobin shortly after his lordship had got away by boat. Four ships lying at the ferry of Unes were taken by the rebels, and one of them was found to contain a quantity of arms, which were conveyed to Tain in fifteen boats. The same vessel had a large sum of money on board, but its commander—Captain Inglis—managed to

escape in a boat with the greater part of it; four casks of coppers, to the value of £70, had to be left behind. After the dispersal of Loudoun's troops the Duke of Perth returned to Inverness, leaving the Earl of Cromartie in command of a sufficient force to keep the Sutherland militia in check. Lord Cromartie appears to have made Skelbo Castle his headquarters, and there he received orders, early in April, to proceed with his regiment to Caithness, or to send his son, Lord Macleod, there in order to raise the militia and collect the public revenues for the Prince's service. He considered it necessary, however, in the interests of the Jacobite cause to remain in Sutherland, "where the militia of the country was still in arms in the mountains," and his son was accordingly sent to Caithness.

Two versions of the capture of Dornoch from the pens of two noblemen—the Earl of Sutherland and Lord Macleod—have been preserved, and are of special interest as the narratives of an outstanding event in the military history of the parish, written by prominent leaders in the two opposing forces that were engaged in the operations they describe.

The Earl of Sutherland's version of the capture of Dornoch is as follows :—

"Under the favour of a thick fog the rebels cross'd (by boats collected from the coast of Murray, notwithstanding the sloops of war stationed there) at the Great Ferry, the guard of which had not been committed to Lord Sutherland's militia, who were stationed more up the country upon the passes that

the rebels were likelyest to attempt to force. For against sea attacks the Earl thought they had been secured. However, it proved otherwise; and on the 20th day of March, 1746, some thousands of the rebels, headed by the Duke of Perth, entered that county near the town of Dornoch, six miles from Dunrobin, which caused Lord Loudoun's regiment, with some other troops, to retire to the hills. But the rebels chief scheme being to get the Earl of Sutherland's person in their possession, march'd in great haste to Dunrobin Castle, where his lordship then was preparing with a full resolution to defend himself against any force of small arms to the last extremity. But having received advice that the rebels had seized four ships in the Ferryoons, with some cannon, and part of his lordship's militia being stationed at twenty miles distance, he thought it was adviseable to endeavour his escape by sea (his house not being proof against cannon), which, with great danger, by a special hand of Providence he effected. Having before not only ordered his own, but all the boats on the Sutherland coast, to the Great Ferry, to facilitate, on any emergency, the transporting Lord Loudoun's troops; but by chance there was an old fishing boat a mile distant from the house, in going to which he run a great risque of being taken by the rebels, being very little more if quite out of musquet shot when they appeared.

"It being a very thick fog, his lordship was exposed not only to the danger of the sea, but the inclemency of the weather all that day, and could see



*Wm. Daniell.*

DUNROBIN CASTLE c. 1817





no ship. About midnight he put into Cromerty for water to refresh him and his few attendants, where knowing he was amongst enemies, made all haste possible to get to sea again, which proved very lucky, it being afterwards discovered that on his arrival an express was sent to a party of rebels who lay near the town to apprehend him. All that night, with most of the following day, was spent in search of a ship, when at last they discovered the Shark sloop of war, which his lordship went on board of, and was convey'd part of the way by sea, after which his lordship, with much difficulty, got over land to Aberdeen.'"<sup>11</sup>

The original MS. from which this extract has been made is preserved in the Dunrobin charter-room. Lord Macleod's account of the capture of Dornoch, which follows, has been taken from the *Earls of Cromartie*, Vol. II, pp. 396-398 :—

“ It being at last resolv'd at Inverness to dissipate the Earl of Loudoun's forces, several regiments were sent to reinforce my father, and we receiv'd orders to march to Tain. Some days after we had been there the Duke of Perth came to us and took the direction of affairs on himself, tho' my father still kept the name of commander-in-chief. The Duke of Perth's being at Tain made my father's presence there less necessary. We went home to Tarbat House and carried some Irish and other officers with us. The thirtieth of March, in the morning, we got an express from Tain to acquaint us that several large boats were arriv'd there from the coast of Murray. We immediately went into the town. These boats had been

sent by the Prince's orders for transporting of the troops at Tain into Sutherland, the enemy having carried away or destroy'd all the boats thereabouts. Everything having been gote ready that day and the following night, the first division of our troops cross'd over into Sutherland next morning led by the Duke of Perth, and landed without opposition, being unobserv'd by the enemy by reason of a thick fog. As we were to cross over at different times, by reason that our boats were too few, and as my father's regiment was to be in the last division, I cross'd over with the Frasers expecting that there would be some action at which I was desirous of being present. But the enemy, so soon as they discovered our being landed retir'd. The county militia went to their respective homes, and the Earl of Sutherland cross'd over the Firth of Murray and went to the Duke of Cumberland's army. The Earl of Loudoun and the President Forbes retir'd with Sir Alexander Macdonald and the Laird of Macleod and their men into the Isle of Sky. The greatest part of Loudoun's own regiment was made prisoners of war, together with their Major, William Mackenzie. We march'd without loss of time to Dornoch, and so soon as my father's regiment was come over I march'd with it to Lord Duffus' house of Skelbo, where I remain'd that night. The Macgregors and Stuarts, who had march'd the same way before me, had taken possession of the three small ships which were lying at the Little Ferry, and which were fraughted by the government. The first of April I march'd from Skelbo to the general rendez-

vous of our troops, from which we proceeded next day in pursuit of the enemy, and the third of the same month we return'd to Skelbo by a different road, having met with nothing to oppose us. The Duke of Perth left us in this march and return'd to Inverness. At Skelbo my father receiv'd orders from the Prince to march himself into Caithness, or to send me into that county to raise the militia, and to take up the publick revenues for his service. . . . My father thinking it necessary for the P.'s service that he shou'd remain in Sutherland, where the militia of the country were still in arms in the mountains, sent me to Caithness with his own regiment."<sup>12</sup>

After Lord Macleod and his regiment had left for Caithness, the Earl of Cromartie appears to have made Dunrobin his headquarters until, on the return of his men, he received orders from the Prince to march his force with all possible haste to Inverness, where they were much needed to strengthen the Jacobite army which was preparing to give battle to the Duke of Cumberland, who was nearing Inverness. Cromartie, imagining that no danger was to be feared from the Sutherland militia, which had been hiding among the hills, and ignorant of the fact that supplies of ammunition had been secretly conveyed to them by their women "under their hoop-petticoats," began his march. He had only reached Culmaily when a party of the militia under Ensign Mackay made a sudden attack upon the retiring force, which, taken by surprise, was broken up, its leaders taking refuge in Dunrobin, while their men were driven towards Little

Ferry. There they made a stand, but were defeated with great loss, and many of them were drowned in attempting to cross the ferry. A detachment of militia gained entrance by force to Dunrobin, the cannon which should have guarded it having been posted at the Gallows Hill, Dornoch, where an attack from the sea was feared. Search was made in the Castle for Cromartie, who was at last found concealed under the hangings of a chair in the Countess of Sutherland's private apartment. She was in secret sympathy with the Jacobite cause, and of this her husband had a suspicion. Thus the occupation of Sutherland by the Jacobite forces ended in disaster, and the Battle of Golspie on 15th April, 1746, made its own contribution towards the defeat of the Jacobite army next day at Culloden, where the hopes of Prince Charlie were irretrievably shattered. The Earl of Sutherland having joined the Royalist army after his escape from Dunrobin took part in that momentous fight, while the Earl of Cromartie, having been conveyed to Inverness in the "Hawk" sloop of war, was afterwards tried in London and condemned to death. But his Countess interceded for him with the King and obtained his reprieve. Loudoun disappeared into the mists of Skye, and history has nothing more to say about him. His failure to hold Dornoch probably ended his military career.

## CHAPTER IX

## THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

AT the beginning of the nineteenth century Dornoch must have presented a scene of desolation and decay. The fine old buildings that in its storied past had been its ornament and pride were now fast crumbling to ruin, nothing having been done to arrest the process of decay that had been going on for centuries. Its ancient cathedral bore sad traces of the ravages of time and its wrecking by fire and tempest. Its noble exterior had been shorn of much of its dignity by the crude alterations and excrescences of the eighteenth century; its roofless nave was but a ruinous enclosure degraded to base uses; its vaulted chapter-house had been converted into an unsatisfactory and unsavoury prison. Some of the manses of its old clergy were now in ruins, while others had become alehouses. The stately pile, once the palatial residence of its bishops, was now a ruin tenanted by rooks, which built their nests on its crumbling walls, round which clustered the hovels of the poorest inhabitants. The Council House—the seat of municipal government and justice—had also become so dilapidated that it was beyond repair. Daniell's drawing of Dornoch, published in 1821, affords some idea of the appearance of the burgh in the early years of the century.

The only school of which it could boast at that time was a single room, described in Mr Sage's

*Memorabilia Domestica* as “laid out in its whole length with wide pews, or desks, running across, while the master’s desk stood nearly in the centre, so as to command a view of the whole. There were three windows in front, and at each of them a bench fitted up for reading and writing.” The schoolmaster at the time was Mr John Macdonald, a graduate of King’s College, Aberdeen, whom Sage describes as “an excellent classical scholar, and highly qualified to teach all the ordinary branches. But his method was defective. He was a merciless disciplinarian, inflicting punishment for the slightest offences, not as part of a system, but in the gratification of temper.” English reading was taught, “but without parsing, or any knowledge of English Grammar. A grammatical study of the English language was at that time utterly unknown in the schools of the north, the rudiments of Latin being substituted in its place.” Mr Sage tells how the janitor, “standing at the outer porch,” called the scholars to their studies by lustily blowing a post-horn. It was also his duty to visit early in the morning the houses where scholars resided and rouse them from their slumbers by blasts of his horn. He then prepared the school for their reception, and for these services he received a free education, “whence his designation of the pauper or poor scholar.”<sup>1</sup> Mr Sage further describes a quaint and amusing method of punishment which the master had instituted “for idle or disorderly scholars.” “The method was this: the first who blundered in his lesson was ordered out of his class and ‘sent to Coventry,’ which was the



back seat, and there ordered to clap on his head an old ragged hat, the sight and smell of which were alone no little punishment. Under the hat, he was ordered to sit at the upper end of the seat, and, as the leader of 'the Dunciad,' styled General Morgan. If a succession of fellows, equally bright, were sent to keep him company, they held the next rank, were accommodated with head-pieces equally ornamental, and were named in order, Captain Rattler, then Sergeant More, and the next was a fiddler, who, besides his head-gear, was furnished with a broken wool-card and a stick, wherewith to exercise his gifts in the line of his vocation. When lessons were done these unfortunate fellows were ordered out to go through their exercise. This consisted in a dance of the dignitaries of the squad, to the melody of him of the wool-card." The only rewards the master gave "consisted of three quills given publicly on Saturday to the boy who, during the week, had kept ahead of his class, by writing the best and most accurate copies."<sup>2</sup> Though Mr Macdonald was a "very popular teacher," the writer of the *Memorabilia Domestica* had a very poor opinion of "the system of teaching pursued at the school of Dornoch," from which he derived little benefit.

He further records that shinty was the popular game, and that on Old New-Year's Day "the whole male population, from the gray-headed grandfather to the lightest-heeled stripling," engaged in a shinty match on the links "from 11 o'clock in the forenoon till it became dark."<sup>3</sup> He describes it as "a most

dangerous game," and quotes the case of a man who was struck on the head by the ball, and died of concussion of the brain. The balls used were made of wood, and, loaded with lead, may be those used in the New-Year's Day game of "Bools," which afterwards superseded shinty, and was played by rival divisions of the town until within recent years. Other amusements he notes were "pancake-cooking on Pasche Sunday," and cock-fighting, which was a pastime practised on Shrove Tuesday in the parish schools of Scotland during the eighteenth century. Mr Sage describes in detail "this barbarous pastime," as it was staged in the court-room of Dornoch, which "was surrendered to the occasion." The school-master with a few chosen friends acted as judges and occupied the sheriff's bench. The combatants were borrowed by the boys from their owners, and after the fight "the youth whose bird had gained the greatest victories" was crowned king, while the next most successful competitor "was associated in the dignity under the title of queen." The coronation ceremony took place in the school, and the master presided, "the seats beside him being occupied by the beauty and fashion of the town." Crowns made by "the ladies of the town" for the royal pair were placed upon the heads of the king and queen, to whom individually the master addressed a few words in Latin. The "life-guards" of their majesties were also given an exhortation in Latin regarding their duties, "the address concluding with the words, *itaque diligentissime attendite.*" The coronation

was followed by a procession of scholars through the streets, headed by their majesties and the life-guards, and preceded by the town drummer and fifer, who "gave note of our advance in strains which were intended to be both military and melodious." The eventful day's proceedings terminated with "a ball and supper in the evening," which was "duly attended by the master and all the 'Montagues and Capulets' of Dornoch."<sup>4</sup>

Mr Macdonald left Dornoch to resume his studies for the ministry, and was ordained and inducted in 1806 to the parish of Alvie. He was succeeded by Mr Cook, who resigned office in 1809, when Mr Beattie was appointed to the vacancy. A complaint was made to the Presbytery in 1810 that the school was utterly inadequate for its purpose, and that in the previous summer "both Teacher and Scholars, being nearly suffocated by bad air for want of room, were forced to desert the Old Schoolroom, and retire to the Church." The approach of winter made it necessary to find other accommodation, and the heritors rented a house for a time. It was "the property of a poor widow, unable to render it comfortable," so that "Master and Scholars suffered in their health in it." Plans were prepared for the erection of "a New and Proper School-Room"; but Dr Bethune reported in August, 1811, that no further progress had been made. Eventually the plans were approved, and the work, involving an expenditure of £250, was intrusted to Mr George Alexander, house carpenter, Dunrobin, who undertook to have it finished by 15th

June, 1812. Two sites for the new school were offered by the Marchioness of Stafford, who "expressed a desire that the site should be at or near the Old Bishop's Castle, as being connected with other improvements in contemplation." The reference here, no doubt, is to the extensive alterations upon the castle, which, when completed, provided accommodation for the scholars, and obviated the necessity for the erection of a new school. Mr Donald Macdonald was schoolmaster in 1817, when a complaint was made to the Presbytery by heritors, magistrates, and residents in Dornoch that he had "deserted his charge." An inquiry was held, and the evidence showed that he had been absent for one month, that he was not attentive to his duties when at home, that he had been in the habit of attending sacraments throughout Sutherland and in distant parishes of Ross-shire, though Dr Bethune had remonstrated with him. It was asserted that while "he taught English reading and writing well, that he seldom or ever caused the boys who were taught Latin to construe," and that the only excuse he could offer was "that construing Latin was not now so much in fashion in Schools." Mr Macdonald's defence was that he had got permission from the Presbytery, the elders, and a heritor's representative to prosecute his studies at the University, and that he had left his brother in charge of the school. He was admonished by the Presbytery, and a few months later he resigned his office. His successor was Mr John Davidson, late schoolmaster at Fortrose. As he was "capable of teaching higher

branches of Education than were taught formerly at this school," it was agreed that extra fees should be paid to him "for teaching the following branches of Literature, viz.: For every Sett of Book-keeping, 10/6; For Mathematics, 10/6 per Session; Geography, 10/6 per Session, and for teaching Greek or French, 5/- per Quarter." Mr James Kirkwood became schoolmaster in 1836, and satisfied the Presbytery as to his knowledge of "Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Arithmetic, and English reading."<sup>5</sup>

Towards the close of the first decade of the nineteenth century a disaster occurred at the Meikle Ferry which involved great loss of life, and cast a gloom over the county. The tragedy occurred on the morning of Wednesday, 16th August, 1809, and was caused by the overloading of the ferry-boat, which was crowded by people who were making their way to a market in Tain. Among those on board was Sheriff McCulloch, Dornoch, who remonstrated with the boatmen for overloading the boat, and was assured that there was no danger. With over one hundred passengers on board, the boat was rowed for a short distance from the shore and the sail was then hoisted. What followed is narrated in the deposition of one of the survivors, taken by Mr Dempster of Skibo, a Justice of the Peace, on the day of the tragedy:—"The wind dying away and there being a considerable swell of waves in the Kyle the sail was taken down—at this time the waves were brecking over the Gunwhales of the Boat & adding to the quantity of water already in the Boat, which was now become



about a foot in depth; they endeavoured to Row, but could not get her on,—upon this the People began to be alarmed, & called out to put about & return to the Shore,—this they did accordingly endeavouring to do, when she sunk by the mere weight on board; in sinking, the People run to one side which occasioned her turning over, bottom upwards;—the Deponent being fortunately able to swim, swam ashore;—he thinks there were about one hundred Persons in the boat, most of whom were drown'd.”<sup>6</sup> Another survivor deponed that “he was saved by laying hold of the Boat’s Mast from which he was fortunately thrown by a Wave upon the back of the Boat from whence he was brought ashore with six others (two men, three women and a young girl) by the small Ferry Boat,—he thinks there were about 100 people in the Boat, not more than nine of whom he thinks were saved.” An official statement, prepared in connection with the disbursement of a fund for the relief of the bereaved families, shows that a sum exceeding £3300 was raised for that purpose, of which £2909 was expended; it states that 99 persons were drowned, the great majority of whom were from the parishes of Creich and Dornoch, while twelve only were saved. Among the drowned was Sheriff McCulloch, a man of fine character and deep piety, greatly respected and beloved, whose tragic end caused widespread sorrow, and whose memory is still cherished in the parish.

Many improvements were effected in the burgh during the years that intervened between 1810-1815. The enclosing wall of the Castle with its old gateway



to the north was removed, and the old feal houses and ruins in its neighbourhood were cleared away to open up the area in front of the Cathedral. The old buildings on the south side of High Street, including the ancient Chapter House and the old Council House, were taken down; the churchyard was enclosed by a stone dyke, and a road was constructed along the south side of it. Extensive repairs were executed upon the ruinous Castle, at a total expenditure of £1363 11s 2d; the tower was roofed, and on the old foundations between it and the original kitchen a new dwelling was erected. The first floor of the modern house was used as a school, to which access was gained by a stone stair outside the east gable. The course of the burn was diverted, and the bend it took towards Wallace Street was straightened, so that it might run under a wide bridge constructed at the entrance to the present hotel square. The credit for those improvements was mainly due to the enterprise and influence of Mr Young of Inverugie, who was at that time Commissioner for the Marquis of Stafford, and also one of the burgh magistrates. When he left the district a few years later, the Town Council unanimously agreed "that this meeting of Council do vote their Thanks to William Young, Esquire of Inverugie, late one of their number, and now about to leave the County of Sutherland, for his continued and marked attention to the Interests of the Burgh in bringing about the Recent great Improvements therein."<sup>7</sup>

The Council House, though it was not much more than half a century old, was evidently in a state of disrepair

in 1809, for in October of that year the Town Council met to consider a demand by a Tain merchant for payment of the sum due to him by a debtor who, at his instance, had been confined in the Tolbooth of Dornoch, "from whence it is alleged he made his escape from the insufficiency of the Jail." Though the Council denied liability, they took immediate steps to guard against a recurrence of the same experience by passing the following minute:—"The Council, desirous of having additional accommodation for the unfortunate persons who may be confined prisoners in the Jail of this Borough, have directed Baillie Boog to give such repairs as the Prison rooms may require as to Doors, Windows, and Locks, and also Direct that the Back room of the Jail upstairs be floored with deals, and two of the vaults underneath also to be floored, and Bedsteads erected in all the rooms, the expence of which the Borough will defray."<sup>8</sup> That the repairs were not sufficient for their purpose may be gathered from the minute of a meeting on 28th May, 1810, which was specially convened to investigate the circumstances connected with the escape of another man who was imprisoned for debt in the Tolbooth. The Council found "that the Tolbooth keepers were inattentive to their duty, both by allowing the Prisoners to be at large in the Council House, and by giving the key of the Tolbooth to any other Person, and also that they neglected to Intimate the escape of the Prisoner to any of the Magistrates or to the Town Clerk; they therefore Fine and Amerciate Kenneth Macleod and Robert Sutherland alias Noe

each in the sum of one pound sterling, and grant warrant for Committing them Prisoners in the Tolbooth of Dornoch for eight days from this date, and thereafter until payment of the foresaid fine by each of them.”<sup>9</sup> Hugh Gray, weaver, and Hugh Leslie, sheriff-officer, were appointed Tolbooth keepers *ad interim*. A few months later, Kenneth Macleod, with the consent of the “Most Noble the Lord Provost,” was reinstated, and was appointed to be “sole keeper of the Tolbooth & Prison rooms of Dornoch.”

The four vaults in the basement were let for business purposes, and the annual roup of those shops yielded a revenue of over £8 a year to the Common Good. At the roup of 1811 mention is first made of a proposal to erect a new Council House. Intimation was made by the Town Clerk, previous to the roup, “that there was an Intention of throwing down the present Council House and Jail, and building a new one in the Castle close, and that the vaults now to be set up by roup were to be on the express condition that the purchasers or tenants thereof are to cede and give up possession at any time during the year & before Michaelmas next, if they or either of them should be required by order of one or more of the Magistrates of the Burgh to do so.”<sup>10</sup> Similar conditions were included in the Articles of Roup for the next two years.

The minute of the last meeting held in the old Council House, on 13th November, 1813, marks an important occasion in the history of the burgh, and is as follows:—

“ At Dornoch the 13th day of November,  
1813 years.

“ In a General Meeting of the Heritors, Freeholders, Commissioners of Supply, and Justices of the Peace of the Shire of Sutherland, and Magistrates and Councillors of the Burgh of Dornoch, called by letter from the Convener, published in the *Inverness Journal* and other newspapers. Present—William Young, Esq. of Inverugie; Major Dugald Gilchrist of Ospisdale; Patrick Sellar, Esq., Factor on the Estate of Sutherland; Angus Fraser, Esq., Factor for George Dempster, Esq. of Skibo and Pulrossie; Thomas Houstoun, Esq., at Lothbeg; Captain John Munro at Achley; Dr William Ross at Cambusmore.

“ Major Gilchrist being unanimously chosen Preses, Mr Young begged leave to call the attention of the Meeting to the ruinous condition of the County Court-house and Jail, And the Necessity there was for some Measure being followed to remedy this inconvenience; And as the Rebuilding of this house must be attended with considerable expense, delay, And inconvenience; He was authorised by the Most Noble the Marquis of Stafford to say that the County would be extremely welcome to accommodation in the Ancient Castle of Dornoch, lately repaired by his Lordship, if the Gentlemen thought that this place was proper for the purpose; And the Meeting having considered of the Subject with every attention, And having examined into the Condition of the present Court-house, And seeing the ruinous situation in which it is, And the accommodation offered by the Marquis

of Stafford, They are perfectly satisfied that it is Necessary to relinquish the present Court-house, And beg leave to thank the Noble Marquis for the accommodation offered by him, And for which the County will pay Any rent his Lordship May think proper to demand."

"Thereafter the Meeting took into consideration the manner in which the Materials of the old Court-house should be disposed of, Resolve that the slates, sarking, and other Materials of that house be sold by public roup on Thursday the Twenty-fifth day of November current. . . . ."<sup>11</sup>

The presence at this conference of representatives of the County is the first record evidence of its interest in the old Council House, which is carefully designated in the minute as the Court House. The generous offer of the Marquis of Stafford saved the burgh an expenditure it could hardly face, and solved a problem which must have given the Town Council some anxiety. Their disposal of the materials of the old building, within a fortnight of their ready acceptance of the Provost's offer, is an indication of their eagerness to avail themselves of the hospitality of the Castle. The proceeds of the roup of the old property, amounting to £98 11s 6d stg., were handed over to the Commissioners of Supply as the Council's contribution towards the erection of a new Court House, which was then contemplated, but which was not accomplished until 1850, owing to many obstacles that barred the way. Their accommodation in the Castle was but a temporary solution of a difficult situation, which was



adopted to obviate the necessity for considerable expenditure upon the repair of an old building, when a new one was needed and thought of. The new arrangement had to be sanctioned by the Court of Session, and accordingly, in June, 1814, the Town Council petitioned the Lords of Council and Session for recognition of the Castle as the Court House and Jail of the burgh, which the Court refused on the ground that the building was private property. Not until 1818 was this difficulty overcome by an offer from the Marchioness of Stafford to grant the Council a lease of the property for 99 years. During the four years that intervened the Council had, of necessity, to use the Castle as a Court House and Jail without the requisite authority. The Council's petition had also craved the authority of the court for the removal of the burgh cross "from its present scite opposite to the old council-house to the front of the castle of Dornoch, now to be appropriated for the court-house and jail." But at a meeting of the Michaelmas Head Court, held on 4th October, 1814, "in the Court-room within the ancient Castle or Palace of Dornoch," it was resolved "that the Cross be continued on its present scite," which it still occupies.

The demolition of the old Council House involved a loss to the burgh revenue, of which the shops in the basement were an important source. The only income now available was that derived from the grazing of the links and the rousing of the customs. The Town Council took measures in 1812 to preserve the links from injury, and agreed "that the Pror.



fiscal prosecute any person who may presume to turn the soil of the said Links or remove or carry away feal or divot or earth therefrom after this date." The links apparently provided the material for the construction and thatching of houses, and the Council was moved to take this step by the consideration "that the Heritable Property belonging to the Burgh is now chiefly possessed by people who pay no rent who by casting & winning Feal & Divot thereon and other Acts of Possession injure the property without paying any Consideration to the Burgh and without leave asked or given."<sup>12</sup> On 28th October, 1815, "the Links of Dornoch were set up for one shilling," but no one was prepared to take them, even at so nominal a rent. After events proved that there was strong opposition on the part of the community to the Council's proposal to let the grazing, which they resented as an encroachment upon their rights. At the same meeting of Council "the piece of commony belonging to the Burgh situated to the North of the Town between the Lands of Achirach and part of Poyntzfield's Lands called Loan-fue was set up at one shilling, but no person offering it was continued in its present state."<sup>13</sup> Nothing can be ascertained regarding this detached bit of land; even its name has disappeared. On November 3rd, 1818, "the Links of the Town from the Burn to the Shore as distinguished by March Stones placed in the Year 1782-3 were roup'd at the upset price of one shilling," and were secured by James Murray at a yearly rent of £1 6s stg. This transaction was immediately followed

by a protest lodged by David Ross, writer, Tain, “on behalf of about three fourths of the Burgage Heritors, Burgesses, and Inhabitants against the letting of the Links as illegal, the said Links forming no part of the Town’s property,” on the ground “that they have been enjoyed by them and their predecessors in Common and as a privilege for the last Three Hundred Years.”<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding this protest, the Council continued to let the grazing, and Murray was their tenant for several years.

The Customs were the duties levied upon cattle and goods brought into the burgh for disposal at its fairs. The charges made in the early years of the century, as recorded in a minute of 4th November, 1812, were as follows :—

For each cow, ox, or cow beast . . . . .	6d
For each stone of Tallow or Butter . . . . .	4d
For each stone of cheese . . . . .	2d
For every 12 yards of Blankets, Plaid, Sheeting, or country cloth . . . . .	2d
For every dozen pairs of shoes . . . . .	3d
For merchant stands or booths, covered with blankets or other covering, per foot . . . . .	3d
For do. do., uncovered, per ft. . . . .	2d

These charges were raised some years later; but the higher rates had an adverse effect upon trade, and they were reduced again. From time immemorial, as one minute states, the customs of the burgh had been roused annually on the Friday preceding St. Barr’s Fair. The income derived from them varied in different years, and showed a downward tendency, as

the fairs brought fewer visitors to the town owing to increased facilities for trade in other parts of the county. In 1828 and the two succeeding years the customs yielded only £3 3s stg., while the rent from the links was £1 10s, so that the total income of the burgh for each of those years was but £4 13s stg., which meant a condition of indigence. An attempt was made to revive trade in 1814 by the inauguration of a weekly market, held on Fridays, "for the purpose of exposing to sale Flesh, Fish, and other articles of food, and that such articles be free of duty or custom for the first three years."<sup>15</sup> The absence of any further reference to it in the burgh records creates the suspicion that the Council's efforts ended in failure. Thus the fairs that, at the dawn of the century, brought crowds of people from all parts of the county to Dornoch gradually died out, with the exception of that which bore the name of St. Barr, so that in process of time the customs of the burgh dwindled down to vanishing point, and the only revenue at the Council's disposal came to be the rent of £1 for the grazing of the links. But for the interest and generosity of its noble Provost the burgh would have been in a state of chronic insolvency.

That the sanitary condition of the burgh was still far from satisfactory may be gathered from the Council's resolution at its meeting on October 4th, 1814, "to prevent in future the nuisances of Dung-hills being laid on the Streets and Swine left at large wandering about the streets and in the Church Yard which is now enclosed with a Stone dyke, and that

they will punish any person emptying out or laying down dung or fuilzie on the Streets or allowing Piggs to go at large.”<sup>16</sup>

“ The meeting likewise declare that the ordinary market place of the Burgh be in the North Street leading from the River of Dornoch to the house of Widow James Barclay.” The fairs had hitherto spread over the churchyard, where booths were erected, and where there is an old gravestone on which was marked the standard ell used for the measurement of homespun cloth. Mr Young intimated to this meeting that the heritors had resolved to enclose the churchyard “ with a substantial Stone Dyke, at which workmen were presently engaged.” Some of the citizens having petitioned “ that a Road should be left open through the Churchyard,” he wanted the opinion of the meeting on this point. After due consideration the Council “ Direct and Order that the Church yard be kept shut at all times, excepting for access to the Church and to admit burials,—that no road be allowed in the Churchyard for horses or carts,—But that stone steps be erected at those parts of the Dyke which are mentioned in the petition for access to foot passengers from the North to the South Street.”<sup>17</sup> The stone steps were set up, but many years ago the present mode of entrance was substituted for them.

In 1816 the Cathedral was again in the hands of tradesmen, who carried out certain suggestions which had been made about thirty years previously. Dr Bethune, soon after his induction in 1778, represented



*Photo. by W. Brenner*

NAVE OF THE CATHEDRAL







to the heritors that the roof of the Cathedral should be ceiled, and that was now done. At a meeting of heritors in 1788, Bailie Macculloch pointed out "that after the seats should be divided there would be no room or accommodation in the kirk for the inhabitants of Dornoch, nor for many others in the parish who did not fall under the denomination of tenants, as the heritors would probably, after accommodating themselves, deliver over their pews to their tenants, who would have an exclusive right to the same. The gentlemen present, satisfied of the fitness of Mr Macculloch's representations and desirous that all classes and denominations of people should be accommodated as much as possible, are of opinion that a loft should be erected in the North Aisle, and one in the East Aisle, which would remove the complained of inconvenience. Therefore they agree that the inhabitants of Dornoch shall have liberty to erect a loft for themselves in the north aisle, but so as not to eclipse the light of the present windows from the lower kirk, nor to come further forward than within two or three feet of the north side of the pillar, and any loft to be erected in the East Aisle not to come further forward than the middle window in the south side thereof."<sup>18</sup> The north transept was spared the indignity of a "loft," probably owing to the inability of the Town Council to face the expenditure its erection involved. But in 1816 a gallery was erected in the chancel, entrance to which was gained by an outside stair, which Mr H. M. Mackay thought was on the north side of the choir. After the raising of the floor of the

church to a higher level, stone stairs had to be erected outside to give access to the lower part of the church, so that there must have been a series of these structures outside the building at different points. This was a feature which could not have added to the dignity or improved the appearance of the old Cathedral, now reduced to but a shadow of its former glory. But Dr Bethune, doubtless, preferred it so. Aberdeen University had conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity upon him in 1812, in recognition of his faithful ministry and his ability. Mr Sage, in his *Memorabilia Domestica*, describes him as "an elegant classical scholar, a sound preacher, and one of the most finished gentlemen I ever remember to have seen. His manners were so easy and dignified that they would have graced the first peer of the realm, and his English sermons, which he always read, were among the neatest compositions I ever heard. In preaching in the Gaelic language he used very full notes, as his mind was of that highly intellectual character that it could not submit to, nor indeed be brought to work in, mere extempore or unconnected discussions. With all his other qualifications he had a delicate sense of propriety, and from anything, even the slightest word, come from what quarter it might, that touched upon this *terra sacra*, he shrunk back as from something positively loathsome."<sup>19</sup> After a ministry extending over well-nigh forty years he passed to his rest in 1816 at the advanced age of seventy-one; his grave is at the south door of the Cathedral.

Dr Bethune was succeeded by the Rev. Angus Kennedy, A.M., who was translated from Lairg to Dornoch in 1817. That was a year of terrible destitution in Sutherland owing to the failure of the crops. The poorer people were in sore straits for the barest necessities of life, and so great was their destitution that they had to live upon cakes made of oatmeal which they mixed with blood drawn from their cattle. Lady Stafford did her utmost to relieve the awful distress that prevailed by the distribution of money and a great quantity of oatmeal among the tenants on her estate. The dwellers on the seaboard were not so destitute as their neighbours on the higher ground. The year of great scarcity was followed by one of plenty, according to a minute of a meeting of Presbytery held at Dornoch on 25th November, 1818, which states that "the Presbytery, having taken into their consideration the abundant harvest which God had been pleased to grant, after a season of uncommon scarcity and distress, amounting almost to a famine, resolved to appoint a day of solemn Thanksgiving to God."<sup>20</sup>

The Town Council, on April 3rd, 1817, presented an address to H.R.H. George, Prince of Wales, Regent of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in which they offered their loyal and dutiful congratulations upon his escape from "the assassin-like attack lately made upon your Royal Highness while performing one of the Highest and Most Important of your duties." The incident which occasioned this address was an attack made upon the Prince Regent by a London mob as he was returning after opening Parliament.

The Scottish Royal Burghs in 1817 presented a petition to Parliament, in which they set forth the hardship of having to maintain Tolbooths for the shires in which they were situated, and a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to make inquiry into their grievance. The Committee sent to the Town Councils concerned a series of questions relative to the subject of inquiry, and the answers of the Town Council of Dornoch are recorded in a minute of 24th April, 1818. They include one item of information regarding the jailor's salary, which was "a small croft of land, two bolls of meal, & ten shillings in money, besides which he has perquisites." He did not reside in the jail, which he locked up nightly before going home. A complaint having been made by the jailer "that visitors on the Prisoners have at present access to the jail at all times of the day and night, and use it as if it was a public house," the Council directed "that no visitors be admitted to or remain with a Prisoner without a writt n order of a Magistrate unless betwixt the hours of 9 & 10 in the morning, 1 and 2 and 5 & 6 in the afternoon. They also direct that no Vinous, Malt or Spirituous liquors be carried in by any visitors without the above permission. Or any great coat, cloak, plaid or other covering under which such may be concealed."<sup>21</sup> Visitors were usually searched before they were allowed to interview the prisoners. This was done to ensure that nothing but food was conveyed to them, and the practice came into vogue after the escape of a prisoner by means of a rope which his brother had surreptitiously brought to him.

A medical report upon the jail, submitted in 1818 by James Robertson, surgeon, of Tain, and William Ross, surgeon, Dornoch, describes it thus :—" The said Jail or Prison consists of two Rooms or Cells for the confinement of Criminals on the ground floor, which are rough flagged, strongly arched above and well ventilated ;—And of two Rooms for the confinement of Debtors (the lowest of which is two Stories high above the cells), which are commodious and neatly finished, well lighted by three Windows in each Room and sufficiently aired, And are indeed the most Salubrious prison rooms we ever had occasion to see. All the said apartments are provided with good strong beds, necessary boxes and other suitable accommodation."'<sup>22</sup>

A later report, based upon an examination of the jail by the Justices of the Peace and Magistrates of the burgh, gives some interesting details regarding the housing of the prisoners. It states that the jail consists of two apartments " forming the two upper stories of an old Tower formerly part of the Palace of the Bishops of Caithness."'<sup>23</sup> Each of these apartments was subdivided by wooden partitions into one day room and two bedrooms. The two vaults under the tower, formerly used for the confinement of criminals, had been abandoned by the Sheriff's orders, " as the vaults were unfit for the confinement of prisoners on account of their dampness and want of fireplaces." The upper apartment had now been set apart for the accommodation of criminals, " though sometimes from the crowded state of the Jail, it has been found



necessary to appropriate the upper day room to the confinement of female prisoners, and to restrict the confinement of criminal prisoners to the sleeping places." In the lower room debtors and "delinquents under the Excise Laws" were accommodated. Though the rooms were not secure enough to prevent the escape of prisoners, measures were being adopted to remedy that defect "until a more fit place for the confinement of prisoners, now under the consideration of the County and Burgh, can be provided."<sup>24</sup>

The periodical escape of prisoners, which was a source of great concern and annoyance to the magistrates in the days of the old prison, did not cease when the Castle tower became the Tolbooth, as the burgh records show. Bailie Munro reported to a meeting of magistrates on February 3rd, 1817, "that on Saturday morning two prisoners—Angus Mackay, a maniac, and Alexander Macdonald, confined for Trespasses agst. the Laws of Excise, had escaped from the Attic or upper Room, from whence they had descended on his the Baillie's house, and from thence the two prisoners by means of a Rope fixed to a ladder on the top of the House found their way to the ground."<sup>25</sup> George Macdonald, the brother of one of the prisoners, was apprehended on the charge of "aiding the Escape of the Prisoners," and having been found guilty of that offence, he was imprisoned. The Council having inspected "the state of the Prisoners rooms," decided "that the open Turrets in the Attic Room should be immediately shut up—That one of them be made up as a Fireplace, another as a closet, and the third



covered in, or rather built up closely. . . . Further that the doors of the two upper Prison rooms for Debtors be lined inside with sheet iron, and a strong Chain and Padlock put on the principal Door.”<sup>26</sup> For the accommodation of the debtor prisoners it was decided to provide at once the following articles of furnishing, viz. :—

20 pairs of Blankets.

2 Stones of Straw for each bed, to be changed every month.

6 Chamber pots of pewter.

4 pewter basons and four white Iron flaggons.

4 tin pots for Water.

Two Carron fenders & a Set of Fire Irons, a Mop & brush.

An ominous item in the equipment of the cells used for criminals was a Strait Jacket. This list is interesting in that it affords some idea of the furnishings that were thought proper for the rooms in which debtors were confined. The creditors at whose instance they were imprisoned were responsible for their maintenance during their confinement. This gave rise to a good deal of trouble, and the magistrates had often to deal with petitions from prisoners for their liberation owing to lack of maintenance, and also on grounds of health.

One such case was that of Alex. Macdonald from Kildonan, imprisoned for debt in 1816, who petitioned the magistrates for his release “in respect he had not means wherewith to maintain himself in prison.” His creditors objected to his liberation on the ground that

"he had cattle & other effects." These, according to the prisoner's statement, had been assigned to his mother, but he had to admit "that the receipt for these articles, although it bears to be written at Dallagan in December last, was actually written by himself in Jail and his Mother's Initials adhibited by him to it without her presence, She never having come to see him since his Incarceration."<sup>27</sup> He was handed over again to the charge of Kenneth Macleod, jailer; but, within a fortnight, he renewed his application, and this time on the ground of health," stating that he was seized with a nervous disorder, whereby his life was endangered, and he produced "two separate certificates by Mr William Ross, Surgeon, bearing that unless the prisoner was set free for a time his life would be endangered."<sup>28</sup> He was liberated on condition that he would "reside in a house in the Burgh" until his recovery, when he must return to prison. A few weeks later he was granted a maintenance allowance of "One Shilling Sterling a Day" during his imprisonment, which his creditors had to pay.

In 1820 another prisoner of good position was given temporary freedom on the strength of a certificate by Alexander McEwen, surgeon in Dornoch, to the effect that "the want of that usual exercise in the open air to which he had been accustomed" had so affected his health that his life was in danger. A Dornoch lawyer was imprisoned for debt in 1825, but he achieved his freedom because neither of his creditors would maintain him in prison. Though the Council, with a total income for the year of about £4,

could ill afford the expenditure, they had to spend £3 stg. in 1826 upon the purchase of clothes for a couple charged with child murder, who were "awaiting trial at the first Justiciary Court at Inverness," and "were destitute of clothing."

Towards the close of the eighteenth century drastic restrictions were enforced regarding the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors, which produced frequent convictions, and added greatly to the number of prisoners for whom accommodation had to be provided. In the autumn of 1827 it was reported "that there are at present no less than five persons incarcerated for breach of the Laws of Excise in Jail." During that year and 1828 eighty prisoners—sixty-three males and seventeen females—were confined in the Tolbooth of Dornoch, and thirty-four of these were offenders against the Excise laws. The greatest number confined at one time was eighteen, which meant awful congestion in such limited space as the two rooms afforded. The defective accommodation necessitated such an adjustment of it as incurred the censure of the Kirk Session, which in 1828 complained to the magistrates "that Mary Ross one of the Prisoners in the Jail was confined in the same apartment with five male prisoners." On investigation, it was found that eleven men and one woman were lodged "in the two apartments allotted for prisoners, and that one of these, a Civil Debtor, is threatening to institute an Action of Damages against the Magistrates for being classed with criminals."<sup>29</sup> Instead of carrying out that threat, the malcontent put an end to

his degrading situation by escaping, with three others, from the Castle on a Sunday morning towards the end of April. The magistrates made every possible effort to recapture the fugitives by immediately sending officers in pursuit of them, by offering a reward of five guineas for the apprehension of each one, by the circulation of handbills, and by advertisements in the *Inverness Courier and Journal*, the Elgin newspapers, the *Aberdeen Journal* and the *North British Advertiser*. All their efforts must have ended in failure, as the records contain no mention of the capture of the escaped prisoners.

An investigation was held by the magistrates, to whom the jailer stated "that he had come to the jail that Sunday morning at the usual hour (about eight o'clock) & noticed that the Court Room window was open." Suspecting the escape of prisoners, he went for the other jailer and the Sheriff-Officer, and on entering they found that the door of the room in which the prison keys were kept had been forced, and that the keys had been abstracted. The poker used in the debtors' room was found "on a step of the stair," the Court Room door was open, "& the key of the attic apartment was upon the sill of the Turnpike window." On ascending to the debtors' room they found it empty and "the keeper of the door lock wrenched from its place and bent so as to render the lock useless." They were informed by the other prisoners that the fugitives had escaped about one o'clock in the morning, "& that they reached the street by leaping over the East Window of the Court room."<sup>30</sup> In a

representation of the case to the Marquis of Stafford, the magistrates attributed "the ease with which the said escape was effected to the insufficiency of the Inner doors and locks, which are quite unsuited for a place of confinement, and the want of Stenchions upon the Court room windows." The representation apparently had not the desired effect, for, when a prisoner charged with cattle stealing made his escape in August of the year following, the magistrates deplored the fact that their suggestions "for strengthening the doors and windows of the jail and Court room have not been fully acted upon." They resolved to take immediate steps "for the further security of the Jail, and with a view to prevent similar attempts by the persons now confined, in the meantime Resolve that the Jail be until further orders, nightly watched on the out side from Sun set to six o'clock in the morning . . . the Watchman to be provided with a large Rattle for the purpose, when necessary, of giving an alarum, and the other two to sleep over night in the Court room."<sup>31</sup> The jailers were dismissed, and in their stead Sergt. Donald Gordon and David Ross, pensioner, were appointed. These measures appear to have been effective, as there is no record of another escape, though a determined attempt was made in May, 1830, which was, however, frustrated. As Hugh Macleod, the notorious Assynt murderer, was one of those concerned in this attempt, the minute of Town Council recording it is of special interest. It bears that "Baillie Gordon stated that as the Jail at present contained two Male Convicts and a Man



accused of an atrocious Murder and robbery," he thought that "the Jail should be watched during night as an additional security against their escape." The magistrates agreed to have the jail guarded from 10 p.m. until 5 a.m., "the persons watching to be provided with a Watchmans rattle to give alarm when necessary, and also to be armed."<sup>32</sup> These special precautions were justified by the discovery of a plot which Macleod and another prisoner had formed for their escape, and which had been reported to one of the jailers by the third prisoner, "Donald Ross from Tongue, a convict at present confined in the Jail." He made it known "that Donald Macdonald, also a convict, and Hugh McLeod, suspected of an atrocious murder," had conspired to make an assault upon the jailer next morning in order to gain possession by force of the prison keys. This information enabled the authorities to adopt preventive measures, and "the attempt at escape, which was actually made, was thus happily frustrated." Ross had been invited to join in the conspiracy; but he declined, and for the good service he had rendered he was recommended by the magistrates for "some mitigation of the sentence of seven years' transportation" under which he lay. There is a tradition that Macleod, during his confinement in the Tolbooth of Dornoch, had a dream in which he saw his father digging a grave in the churchyard, and heard his father say it was for him, but that he would not need it for a year, by which time he could not escape it. Strangely enough, his trial, fixed for September 23rd, 1830, had, owing to the jury



being incomplete, to be postponed until September, 1831, when he was tried before a Justiciary Court at Inverness and sentenced to death. Before his execution on October 24th, 1831, he confessed his guilt to the prison chaplain.<sup>33</sup>

The annual roup of customs could not be held on the customary day in 1826 "in consequence of a number of the inhabitants being at Clashmore on business with the Collector of Excise, who is there collecting duties & paying pensioners." Clashmore was not a convenient centre for the purpose, but the inn there afforded better accommodation for the collector and his staff than Dornoch could offer, "the inn there being a very poor one." That description is confirmed by the testimony of John Laurie, the eccentric dominie of Invershin, who visited Dornoch about 1829, and described it as "the most miserable and wretched town in the whole kingdom. To the traveller it presented nothing but a sad scene of wretched poverty, inactive indigence and gloomy solitude. The only public accommodation for visitors was a miserable little inn thatched with heather."<sup>34</sup> Four years later, pensioners complained of having to go to Clashmore for payment of their allowances, and representations on the subject having been made to the Marquis of Stafford, he provided Dornoch with an excellent inn. Thereupon the magistrates expressed the hope that the Collector of Excise would see the propriety of making Dornoch his headquarters, assuring him "that the New Inn established here by the Marquis of Stafford affords accommodation in every respect superior to the House at Clashmore."

An increase in the number of shipwrecks in the Moray Firth, attended by great loss of life, moved the Town Council in 1827 to petition the Board of Trade for the erection of a lighthouse on Tarbatness "to guide Mariners in a storm in a tempestuous night." Tarbatness was recommended because of its "central situation," and no better selection of a site could have been made. Visible over a wide area, the Tarbatness lighthouse—a familiar object to Dornoch folk—has for nearly a century shed its friendly light over the waters of the Moray Firth, and guided generations of mariners to safety.

The freedom of the burgh must have been rarely conferred by the Town Council in those days; otherwise the bestowal of that honour was not often recorded in the burgh records. Those available belonging to the eighteenth century record the admission of only one burghess, viz., Brigadier-General Sinclair of Rosline. Bishop Pococke, who visited Dornoch in 1760, claimed to have been made a burghess on that occasion, but the minutes of Council contain no record of the fact, and a roll of burghesses was not kept. During the early part of the nineteenth century the honour was bestowed on but one occasion, when, on 11th August, 1827, the Bailies and Town Clerk "proceeded on a Deputation from the Town to Dunrobin Castle" for the presentation of burghess tickets by the Provost to Lord Colchester and the Hon. Charles Abbot of the Royal Navy. The Marquis of Stafford discharged his duty as Provost "after a suitable address expressive of Lord Colchester's public

services, and in particular for his services as Chairman of the Parliamentary Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges.”<sup>35</sup> The honour conferred upon Lord Colchester at Dunrobin was apparently a recognition by the Town Council of his lordship as the representative of the Government mainly responsible for the administration of the grant which had enabled the Marquis of Stafford and other proprietors to undertake the construction of roads and bridges throughout the northern counties. Mr H. F. Campbell, in his comprehensive and instructive handbook, *Caithness & Sutherland*, gives a concise and interesting description of the inaccessibility of Sutherland before this great reform brought the north into closer touch with the Lowlands. “Prior to 1807,” he says, “there were no roads in Sutherland and no bridges except Brora Bridge. From the Meikle Ferry to the Ord a horse track ran along the sea-shore, and by similar tracks Strathnaver and Assynt communicated with the ferries at Portinlick and Bonar, but no wheeled vehicles were in use in any part of the county. The access to Sutherland from the south of Scotland was mainly by sea. On the mainland the county was reached by the Meikle Ferry, Bonar Ferry, and Portinlick. . . . The Sutherland portion of the road from Inverness to Thurso (which traverses the east coast from Bonar by Evelix, and the Mound to the Ord) was completed in 1812-13, when the Kyle was spanned by the Bonar bridge. Within twenty years from that date upwards of 400 miles of roads were constructed throughout the county. . . . In 1819 a mail-coach

began to run from Tain to Thurso with a daily service of mails, and from that time regular daily intercourse with the south of Scotland gradually extended to the remoter parts of the county.’’<sup>36</sup>

Great alarm prevailed throughout Scotland during the years 1831 and 1832 owing to a visitation of cholera, which appeared first in Haddington, then visited Edinburgh, afterwards wrought great havoc in Glasgow, and later extended to other parts of the west and even to the north of Scotland. As Helmsdale and Golspie were infected districts, the proximity of the dreaded scourge created great anxiety in Dornoch, which is manifest in the minute of a Town Council meeting held on 12th November, 1831:—‘‘ The meeting participating in the alarm which the progress of the Cholera Morbus is well calculated to excite, and impressed with the propriety of following up within their jurisdiction the directions issued by His Majesty’s Privy Council for the prevention of that destructive pestilence, Earnestly Recommend to the Inhabitants the most scrupulous attention to cleanliness both in their persons and houses, as the best means of counter-acting any tendency of an epidemic nature which the Cholera may possess:—And with a view to this object the Meeting order & Enjoin that all pigsties, ashpits and manure of every description be removed from within the Burgh against Wednesday next under certification that any quantity of manure found after that date within the town will become confiscated to the Burgh as public property.’’ A committee, including the Rev. Angus Kennedy, was appointed ‘‘ to visit

the houses within the town & see that the above directions are strictly complied with.''<sup>37</sup> The committee, having discharged their task, submitted a report to the Town Council, which sets forth the wretchedness and poverty that prevailed among many of the poorer inhabitants, "whose houses are so ill roofed and thatched as to admit the rain through in every quarter, insomuch that at the present wet season the inmates can scarce find a dry corner in which to place their beds.'" It was further reported that "the streets are deficient in cleanliness, many persons from want of suitable ashpits throwing ashes and water upon them. . . . Very many of the inhabitants (Widows & old and infirm people) are destitute of the necessaries of life & the privations they endure are only equalled by the patient and becoming manner in which these are borne.''<sup>38</sup> The report is signed by Mr Kennedy.

The cholera scare did more to improve the sanitation of the burgh than the oft-repeated resolutions and injunctions of the magistrates. So fearful were the citizens of infection, and so careful were they to avoid all risk of it, that, without the direction or official sanction of the Town Council, they instituted of their own accord "a system of guard," by which pickets were posted to rigidly exclude from the town all visitors from infected areas. There was no respect of persons, and the Procurator Fiscal for the County, who resided at Golspie, "was refused admittance to the town when coming on official business." On account of the cholera St. Barr's Fair was not held in 1832. In the neighbourhood of the Earl's Cross may



still be seen an isolated grave in which was buried the body of a man who was supposed to have died of cholera at Portgower, and whose remains were denied interment in the churchyard of Dornoch. The stone that marks his grave bears an inscription which was intended to refute the idea that he was a cholera victim, and thus to clear his memory from what was evidently regarded as a stigma and a reproach. It ends thus :—" It was supposed he died of cholera, but afterwards contradicted by most eminent doctors."

The passing of the Reformed Bill in 1832 deprived Town Councils of their right to elect representatives to Parliament, and also of the power to elect new councillors to take the places of those who retired by rotation. Not until 1868, however, did the Town Council of Dornoch discontinue their old method of filling up vacancies in the Council.

The parliamentary boundary of the burgh was defined about this time, and St. Michael's Well was designated its north-easterly limit. The Act defining the boundary provided that owners of property residing more than seven miles from the burgh should have no vote in its affairs. Mr George Gunn, factor for the Duke of Sutherland and a magistrate of the burgh, was thereby deprived of his vote, as his residence at Rhives was just beyond the statutory limit. Mr Gunn devised an ingenious scheme whereby he might circumvent the Act of Parliament and retain his vote in the burgh. He gave orders for the erection of a stone structure bearing the inscription " St. Michael's Well " on a site about two hundred yards to the north-east of the



old well, which brought the boundary within the stipulated distance of Rhives, and so the problem was solved!

The Marquis of Stafford, upon whom a Dukedom was conferred in 1833, was Provost of Dornoch for the long period of forty-eight years, during which he proved himself a generous friend to the burgh. He had been ailing for some time before his visit to Dunrobin in 1833, where he arrived on 5th July in a prostrate condition, and died there ten days afterwards. For nearly half a century he had been associated with his wife in the administration of her vast estates, upon which many great improvements had been effected. His management of affairs was marked by impartiality and justice, and he has been described by one who knew him well as “a person of excellent sense, judgment, and of great benevolence of disposition.”<sup>39</sup> In his will he expressed the desire to be buried “without parade or absurd expense,” and in accordance with that wish the arrangements for the funeral were of a simple character. The *Inverness Courier* of 31st July, 1833, contained a graphic and interesting account of his interment, which described in detail the impressive scene at Dunrobin on that beautiful summer day—the vast concourse of people from all parts of the county who had assembled to pay the last tribute of respect to one whose memory they revered, “the decent, orderly and respectful behaviour of the vast assembly of ten thousand mourners,” the simple but impressive service “suited to the solemnity of the occasion,” which the Rev.

Angus Kennedy, Dornoch, conducted; the passing of the funeral procession between the long lines of people arranged according to the several parishes, to which they returned after the funeral had passed on its way to Dornoch. There “the procession was met at the boundary of the burgh by the magistrates of Dornoch, and all the company alighted, except the chief mourner. It was here joined by three hundred and sixty of the most respectable persons of the burgh of Tain. . . . From this point the funeral, conducted by the Magistrates, proceeded on foot to the place of interment, which is in the south aisle of the church, the road being lined on each side by the people, who stood with their heads uncovered. The fine funeral service of the Church of England was then read in a most impressive manner by the Rev. Edward Ramsay, of St. John’s Chapel, Edinburgh, and the body was deposited in its last earthly abode. Thus were the mortal remains of this respected nobleman committed, amidst the sincere and unaffected tears and regrets of thousands, to the tomb of the ancient Earls of Sutherland, whose title he had exalted to the first rank in the Peerage, whose domains he had so improved, and whose people he had entirely made his own. Long will it be a day felt and remembered throughout the county of Sutherland.”<sup>40</sup>

When the Duke’s grave was being prepared the workmen discovered the lead coffin that contained all that was mortal of Earl John, who had been buried there just a century before. The coffin was identified by the brass plate that had adorned its wooden shell,

which had crumbled to dust. The *Courier*, commenting upon the discovery, says:—"The circumstance of one hundred years precisely having passed since the funeral of the last Earl who was buried at Dornoch, could not fail to be remarked on such an occasion and to make a deep impression on minds strongly predisposed to be affected by such circumstances." Earl Roy died on 26th July, 1733.

The Duchess Countess, after six years of widowhood, died in London on 29th January, 1839, in the seventy-fourth year of her age, and, in accordance with her own desire, was laid to rest in the vault she had constructed under the chancel of Dornoch Cathedral, to which her husband's coffin had been transferred. Her remains were conveyed by sea to Aberdeen, and thence in a hearse drawn by six horses to Dornoch, where they were reverently interred within the walls of the ancient and historic church her generosity had re-edified. Soon after her husband's death she had set her heart upon the restoration of the old fabric, and her idea, though never expressed, may have been the erection of a noble and enduring memorial to one to whom she was so devotedly attached and whose loss she deeply mourned. Her proposal was submitted to a meeting of heritors held on 18th September, 1834, and the minute bears that it was "specially convened to take into consideration a proposal from Her Grace the Duchess Countess of Sutherland in regard to making certain alterations on the Cathedral of Dornoch." The minute goes on to record that Mr Gunn, who appeared for Her Grace, "Represented to

the meeting that the ancient Cathedral of Dornoch and the adjacent ground had since the abolition of Episcopacy in Scotland formed part of the Earldom and estate of Sutherland, but in respect (as Her Grace is informed) that the other heritors of the parish had on more than one occasion contributed along with her family to the expense of some partial repairs on the interior of the Building, and to alterations on the flooring and sitting of the church, she considered it fair and equitable to view the use and accommodation of the edifice as a Parish Church, and on this footing Her Grace authorised him, Mr Gunn, to submit a proposal to the meeting which she hoped they would consider it advisable for them and the parishioners at large to accept as being for the general benefit." Among the proposals submitted on her behalf were the restoration "in the manner I shall be advised" of "the nave or west end of the Cathedral now in ruins," and its addition "to the church for the purpose of public worship"; the repair, restoration, and reseating of "the north and south aisles in the manner shewn in a sketch to be herewith laid before the meeting, or in some similar manner, on the conditions herein expressed." The conditions as stated in the minute were that the other heritors would consent to the choir being repaired by the Duchess Countess and to its becoming for all time her property and that of her successors in the earldom of Sutherland, on the understanding that they should bear "the sole expense of keeping the same in repair for all time coming," and that the remainder of the church, after the allotment of family pews to Skibo, Poyntzfield, Embo, and one

to the Magistrates of the burgh, "be divided according to the established law and practice."

Her Grace's offer, with the conditions attached thereto, were accepted by the heritors, and the renovation of the Cathedral was begun in 1835. The work was entrusted to an Edinburgh architect, Mr Burn, who carried it out in accordance with the crude ideas of the worst period in church architecture. The original intention of the Duchess appears to have been the restoration of "the broken kirk of Dornoch" to its original form. That is indicated by Mr Loch in his "Memoir of the First Duke of Sutherland," where he says:—"It is understood to be the intention of the Duchess Countess of Sutherland to restore the whole to its original condition under the direction of Mr Burn of Edinburgh, and to adorn it with a statue from the talents of Chantrey."<sup>41</sup> It was unfortunate that the restoration of St. Gilbert's stately fane should have been put into the hands of the architect who had just wrought such havoc upon the historic fabric of St. Giles, Edinburgh. Devoid of any reverence for the fine old work of past centuries, he subjected the whole building to a process of renovation which was nothing short of arrant vandalism. In his chapter on "The Architectural History of the Cathedral," Dr Simpson describes in detail the ruthless treatment the fabric received at the hands of its renovator, and the irreparable destruction of some of its finest features. It was modernized almost beyond recognition, though its fine proportions were preserved.

The Duchess had intended to put stained glass into the gable window of the chancel, in memory of her



husband, but the proposal raised such a storm of protest in the community that she abandoned the idea, and the window was built up, the marble tablet to her own memory being afterwards placed in the centre light. At her express desire, the second Duke erected to his father's memory a fine statue by Chantrey, which for long occupied the site on which the high altar stood in pre-Reformation days; it now stands at the west end of the nave.

In commemoration of the seven hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Cathedral the old stonework of the pillars and arches supporting the tower, as also of the chancel gable and walls, has been laid bare, thus restoring to the old church some measure of its original character, though it will always bear the impress of the ruthless hand that marred the dignity and beauty it once possessed. The septcentenary celebrations on 27th August, 1924, created widespread interest throughout the country, and the Cathedral, emerging from the obscurity to which it had been relegated for so long, became a centre of attraction, which drew to St. Gilbert's shrine a crowd such as had never, within living memory, gathered at Dornoch. The outstanding and most impressive event in the proceedings of that memorable day was the commemoration service in the Cathedral, conducted by the Moderators of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church—Dr Cathels and Dr Inch—two great Scottish Churches thus uniting to do honour to the memory of Bishop Gilbert, its saintly founder, who may justly be regarded as the creator of Dornoch.





*Bulletin Photo.*

## SEPTCENTENARY SERVICE



## CHAPTER X

THE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF THE  
CATHEDRAL

By W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON, M.A., D.Litt., F.S.A. Scot.

THE student who endeavours to disentangle the architectural history of Dornoch Cathedral is confronted at the outset by a special problem, in the difficulty of recognising and determining with accuracy the work of the various periods during which the fabric has undergone repairs or restoration. Paradoxical though the statement may seem, this difficulty becomes most acute in dealing with the latest restoration—the drastic refashioning of the ancient pile which was carried out by William Burn of Edinburgh between the years 1835 and 1837.<sup>1</sup> Previous to the nineteenth century, architects and masons alike wrought persistently in the style of their age, so that as a rule there is little difficulty in identifying the work of the various medieval building periods, and of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. But with the Gothic Revival in the early nineteenth century came in the practice of executing facsimiles of older work, and where this pseudo-medieval work of the Victorian period has itself now grown weather-beaten and weather-eaten—as has happened at Dornoch—it sometimes becomes extremely difficult to distinguish it from the genuinely ancient work. An outstanding

instance of this occurs at Dundrennan Abbey, where it is now well-nigh impossible to say whether certain details are work of the thirteenth century or parts of the extensive repairs carried out by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests after the year 1841, when the Abbey passed into their custody.

In dealing with Dornoch Cathedral it was to be expected that the discovery of Burn's original measured drawings for his restoration, which I have been privileged to consult through the kindness of Mr David E. A. Horne, architect, Golspie,<sup>2</sup> would have greatly assisted in the task of unravelling the architectural problems of the building. Two circumstances, however, have been productive of disappointment in this respect. In the first place, among the drawings which have been placed in my hands, there occurs no survey of the Cathedral in the semi-ruinous and patched-up condition in which Burn found it. Such a survey would have been of supreme value in enabling us to determine the exact scope and nature of his operations. And in the second place, it is clear from a glance at the measured drawings that these do not at all represent the scheme actually carried out. Bad as the Victorian restoration is, it would have been far worse had the architect's original proposals been translated into stone and lime and plaster. Fortunately indeed for the ancient church, a moderating influence—possibly the question of expense—had made itself felt, and the restoration as we now behold it falls happily short in important respects of the full measure of the drastic proposals which the architect

at first suggested. Even as it is, the cathedral is a sad and abiding witness to the need of Mr Hardy's form of prayer to be used in time of danger to churches :—

“ From restorations of thy fane,  
From smoothings of thy sward,  
From zealous churchmen's pick and plane,  
Deliver us, good Lord.”

It may be well, at the outset of our inquiry, briefly to summarise the documentary evidence which is available as to the architectural history of the Cathedral. In the earlier periods such evidence is almost entirely lacking. It might be presumed that Bishop Gilbert would commence the erection of his cathedral church soon after his consecration to the diocese in 1223, though the administrative procedure connected with the removal of the high church from Halkirk to Dornoch would doubtless take a certain time. On the other hand we may recollect that at Elgin Cathedral the oldest work in the south transept is of so early a character as to make it almost certain that the work of building was put in hand without waiting for the papal sanction which followed in 1224. Something similar may have taken place at Dornoch, where the great Transitional piers of the crossing can hardly be much later than the date of Bishop Gilbert's accession. It is doubtful how much weight should be assigned to the argument often used, that the succession of styles took place at a later date in the more remote parts of the kingdom. The evidence of buildings like Kirkwall Cathedral and Kildrummy Castle



seems distinctly against this idea. Masons would be brought from the south, and would work in the styles to which they were accustomed there. At all events in 1239 the Cathedral was sufficiently far advanced to receive the bones of the murdered Bishop Adam, which were translated hither from Halkirk and interred with full solemnities.<sup>3</sup> By this time the choir at least would doubtless have been completed. In its finished state the church comprised a nave of four bays, with aisles, transepts, a choir, and a central tower. In 1291 Edward I made a gift from the forest of Darnaway of 40 seasoned oaks for the fabric of the church.<sup>4</sup> As Dr Bentinck has rightly pointed out, we have no means of judging from this entry whether the wood was needed for some necessary repair, or whether the building of the church was still in progress. But the use of the phrase "for the fabric of the church" certainly suggests, to those who are familiar with the language of building in the Middle Ages, that the entry refers to structural work of some kind rather than to stalls or furnishings.

In 1570, when the town of Dornoch was stormed and given to the flames by the wild Mackays of Strathnaver, the Cathedral was wholly burned except the tower, in which the burghers held out for a week. On this occasion the tomb of St. Gilbert, who was buried beneath the crossing at the entrance to the choir, was broken open and his bones scattered.<sup>5</sup> Further damage was done to the ruins by a great storm on the night of "Gunpowder Treason," 5th November, 1605, which blew over the north arcade of the



nave.<sup>6</sup> Between 1614 and 1634, under the Caroline Episcopacy, the Cathedral was partly repaired, the choir and transepts being re-roofed, while the ruined nave was partitioned off and abandoned to decay.<sup>7</sup> The Presbytery and Session records show that a good deal of half-hearted tinkering with the semi-dilapidated fabric took place between 1714 and 1716, but the entries do not cast any material light upon the structural history of the building, and the piecemeal effort was soon abandoned for want of means. In 1728 a new steeple was built,<sup>8</sup> but the Session records show that it was unfinished in 1732. In 1730 a scholars' loft was built "about the Turnpike," and another for "the tenants and commonalty of the parish in the North Isle of the kirk." In April, 1732, Lord Strathnaver received permission to erect a loft "in the East side of the South Isle," with leave to "strike out" a door for entrance to the loft. In 1775 a grant of £300 was obtained from Exchequer towards the repair of the church, and thereafter lofts were introduced in the choir and south transept, doors reached by outside stairs being hacked through the ancient walls. The roof was ceiled, and a wooden floor put in at a higher level.<sup>9</sup> According to the Rev. D. Sage, the roof was ceiled again, and a gallery erected, in 1816.<sup>10</sup> The condition of the church as thus patched up is revealed in an engraving by William Daniell, dated 1813,<sup>11</sup> while the ruined nave is illustrated by Charles Cordiner in 1795.<sup>12</sup> So matters remained until 1835-7, when the Cathedral received a thorough restoration according to the ideas of the time. The nave was rebuilt

without aisles, the remains of which, including the noble south arcade shown by Cordiner, were complacently cleared away. The other portions of the church were thoroughly repaired, refaced, and the whole brought to a smug uniformity by a liberal application of tame ashlar, harling, plaster, and yellow-wash. A mock vaulted ceiling was introduced in all four parts of the church. In the chancel a burial vault was contrived for the Sutherland family.<sup>13</sup>

As a result of these operations, the only conspicuous fragments of ancient work now visible in the interior of the church are the four great piers and bearing arches of the tower, with the walls and windows of the choir. From all these portions the plaster and yellow-wash have recently been removed. The piers are square on plan, uniting with the adjoining walls on two faces, and having on each of the others a cluster of three half-engaged shafts, one large central one flanked by two smaller ones. The central shafts are 14 inches in diameter, the lateral ones 9 inches. The square arris of the pier emerges between the two clusters. These shafts carry bell-capitals, rising from a rolled necking into a square form corresponding to the abacus, whose lower edge is turned off in a broad splay. The effect in appearance, though not structurally, has something of the character of the double impost so often observed in early Byzantine architecture. It is unusual, and highly distinctive. Over the large middle shafts the square parts of the bells and the abaci are slightly keeled centrally. All these impost mouldings, from necking to abacus, are

continued round the square edge of the piers. The four pointed bearing arches are of two orders. The inner order, rising from the central shaft, has a plain flat soffit chamfered at the angles, the splayed surfaces thus formed each carrying a sharply pointed and quirked bowtell. The outer order, rising from the lateral shafts, has a roll-and-hollow within a quirked and pointed bowtell having a chamfered member outside all.

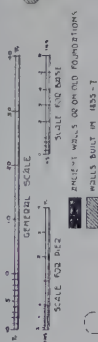
The base of the north-east pier has recently been exposed below the modern flooring. It is of good and early character, consisting of a large basal roll upon which a smaller stilted and quirked roll is superimposed. During the excavation of this base a dwarf wall was discovered, running out from the east and west sides of the plinth on which the base stands. It was probably the support of a former wooden floor, as the plinth, which is 5 feet square and built of dressed stone, has been cut into, apparently to make room for a sleeper-joist. This floor would have been above the original floor and under the present one.

The piers are built of Dornoch sandstone, and the capitals and arches are of sandstone from Embo.<sup>14</sup> In the piers the courses are rather irregular, averaging 12 or 13 inches in height, and the joints are open, as usual in early work. Numerous masons' marks are everywhere apparent. The first six courses of the arches are built with level beds, forming what the medieval masons called a *tas-de-charge*, the span of the true arch being thus reduced in order to secure

economy in centering. In stripping the plaster the masonry of the piers, except the north one, was found to be badly damaged about where the eighteenth century lofts would have impinged upon them. This damaged stonework has now been carefully made good. Some of the stones in the south-west pier are much weather-worn. The piers are 27 feet in height, including the capitals, and the arches rise to a height of 47 feet above the original floor. A massive oaken bonding-beam is embedded horizontally in the masonry above the north transept arch.

The tower carried by these piers and arches is now of two floors, the upper one being at the parapet level and beneath the broach spire. A newel stair, 2 feet 2 inches wide, placed in a semi-circular tower in the angle between the choir and the north transept, leads up to the tower. It has been thought that this stair is modern,<sup>15</sup> but the architectonic evidence does not support this view. The stair is constructed partly in the thickness of the choir and transept walls immediately behind the adjoining pier. Once the great tower was built, any subsequent attempt to dig out the masonry here in order to provide a stair would have invited a catastrophe: nor would there have been any reason to incur the risk, as a stair could easily have been built entirely outside. The whole character of the newel stair is ancient, and on the outside of the circular tower, near the top, are visible weathered dressed stones of a character and tint totally different from the undistinguished ashlar-work of 1835-7. Bishop Pococke, who visited the Cathedral in 1760, has left

# •DORNOCH•CATHEDRAL•



WALLS BUILT IN 1853-7

aisle 14 ft. wide  
now destroyed

STATE OF FIRST  
DOOR OF SUTHERLAND  
OFFICE OF SIR  
RICHARD H. MORRIS

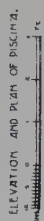
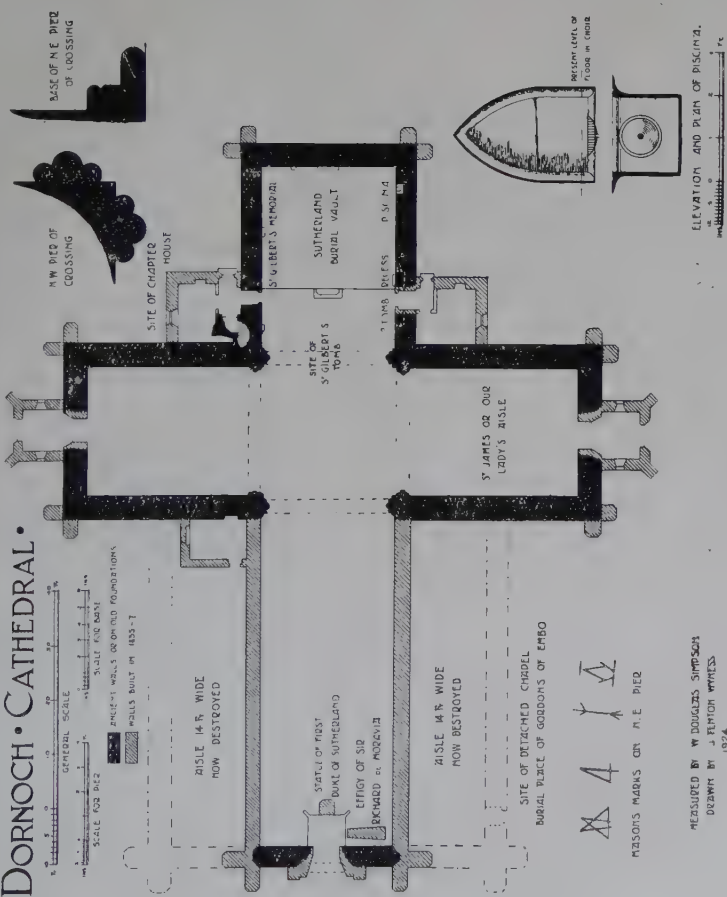
aisle 14 ft. wide  
now destroyed

SITE OF DETACHED CHANCEL  
BURIAL PLACE OF GOODHOUS OF EMBO

4 1 2 3 4

MAISON'S MARKS ON N.E. PIECE

MEASURED BY W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON  
DRAWN BY J. FLUCHER WHEAT  
1924.







us a short description of it as it then stood, in which he makes a curious mistake in describing the "eastern part" as ruined and the "body or nave" as still in use.<sup>15a</sup> In Scotland more usually it was the choir, held to be polluted by the Mass, that was abandoned—a fact which doubtless led Pococke into error about Dornoch, where the converse took place.<sup>16</sup> Under this misapprehension the Bishop describes a round staircase tower at the "south-west angle of the middle part"; and as it is clear he had the church turned round about in his own mind, the stair referred to is obviously that now existing in the north-east corner. It has 53 steps, and thereafter a modern straight stair in wood leads to the lower floor of the tower. A number of the steps of the newel stair have been renewed,<sup>17</sup> and have square under edges; in the ancient steps the underneath is turned off in a broad curve. In the old steps the rise or vertical face unites directly with the newel, but in the new steps there is a short oblique face. The old steps are also much worn. The modern ones are steps 19-42, 47, and 52. The staircase has now a flat leaded roof with modern coping, and is lit by modernised pointed windows. At the base of the stair a small chamber is formed under the ascending steps.

The tower measures about 23 feet square within walls 3 feet 6 inches thick, built with a pronounced and very beautiful external entasis. In place of the modern wooden stairs that lead up to the two floors, there had originally been a newel stair inside the tower at the north-east corner. Part of its cradle remains,

and the holes from which the steps have been torn are still visible. In the lower floor each wall has a large oblong bay narrowing outwardly to a modernised pointed window. The bays, which are roofed in with flat slabs of freestone, are old, and the original windows were not so high. They are shown in Daniell's engraving. The upper floor, at the springing of the spire, is a little above the level of the ancient floor here, indicated by rough corbels, of which there are two placed close together at the centre of each wall. Below these are visible in the south part of the tower the springers of two massive splayed ribs spanning it from east to west in order seemingly to strengthen the floor. Beneath each rib is the stub of a corbel. The rise of these splayed ribs is too high for the present floor above, and they may either have been for a vaulted roof, or more probably the tower has been reduced in height. Clearly there has been a good deal of alteration in the interior of the tower, and its architectural history is very obscure. The masonry of the walls is greatly masked, but seems to be partly coursed rubble with dressed freestone quoins. On the inside there is a course of freestone ashlar about 2 feet 6 inches above the lower floor, the wall here being raked back. Round the spire is an allure walk 2 feet broad, paved uniformly with flat stone flags and protected by a parapet about 3 feet 6 inches high, having a moulded cope without embrasures. There are corner bartisans similarly finished. The south-west bartisan shows a blocked embrasure. The parapet is borne by a plain corbel table of two mem-

bers, and continuous corbellings carry the bartisans. Plain grooved runnels, now much weathered, are provided for the drainage, but are not now in communication with the roadway. Originally the latter would no doubt be paved in the usual fashion, gutter-stones discharging by the runnels being set alternately with stones wrought to a central ridge and sloping to the gutter-stones on either side.

The side walls of the chancel each contain three long pointed windows. Externally these walls, which are harled, seem all ancient, as far as one can judge where the rough rubble masonry is exposed. The east gable is ancient, and apparently in substance unaltered, though the window dressings and mouldings are modern. This gable has not been refaced by the smug ashlar used in the other gables, but is harled. It has three long pointed lights with a fourth above, all most beautifully proportioned, and forming, alike from the inside and without, a highly dignified east end to the church. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that the same arrangement of lights is found in the chapel window at Kildrummy Castle, also built by Bishop Gilbert. But it would be unwise to attach too much significance to this resemblance, for at Kildrummy the upper window is a mere light to the roof-timbers, and moreover in its present state is not original work<sup>18</sup>; and this, as we shall see, is the case at Dornoch also.

By the removal of their plaster covering the whole of the interior walls of the chancel have recently been exposed, with the gratifying result of proving that

these walls, with the internal bays of all their windows, are ancient and in the main undisturbed, except the apex of the east gable, with the upper light, which has been rebuilt at an uncertain date.

At a height of 5 feet 4 inches above the present floor of the chancel (over the Sutherland Vault), the walls all round are retired about 8 inches, forming an offset on which are raised the window bays. As now seen this offset dates from 1724, and is somewhat above the old one, which had been much disturbed apparently when the high flooring was inserted about this level after 1775. Below this offset the walls are built of partly coursed rubble, with very wide jointing, and dressed sandstone quoins. Mostly the stones are long and low in the course, but some are massive irregular blocks. Near the east end in the south wall is the piscina. The niche has a pointed arch 2 feet 10 inches high, and is 1 foot 9 inches wide. Its moulding is a half-engaged roll set on a chamfer, and is continued down the jambs and also along the sill of the piscina, which is below the paving of the present floor. The basin, set centrally, is  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, rather shallow, with a medial drain, and is surrounded with a flattish roll-moulding. On the west jamb, inside the arch, has been used a stone which may be a fragment of older sculptured work, much worn, or possibly it is merely an example of the curious effects produced by the etching of the weather upon a softish freestone. In the opposite end of this wall, at the modern door to the vestry, a built-up arched recess has been exposed.

It measures 9 feet 8 inches wide and has been about 9 feet high above the present floor. Dr Bentinck has suggested that this recess may have been the tomb of Bishop Adam.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, it must be observed that the west jamb of the recess is carried back into the thickness of the wall for a distance of nearly 3 feet, as was learned recently when an eighteenth century stone, found in the churchyard, was being built into the packing that fills the recess. Also the jambstones extend vertically in the wall for a distance of at least 4 feet beneath the springing of the arch. These features at first suggest that we have here to deal with the ingo to a door rather than with a tomb-recess. On the other hand, it seems necessary to account for the slight but distinct evidence of the other side of the arch 9 feet 8 inches to the east, where almost all traces of it have been obliterated by an inserted stone (No. vi of those in the chancel, catalogued below). Perhaps the feature indicated by these obscure remains may have been the sedilia, though it seems rather far to the west for such a purpose.

In the lateral walls of the chancel the window bays are about 1 foot deep, while those in the gable attain a depth of 1 foot 3 inches. The daylight width of the windows is 3 feet 2 inches, and the bays are splayed out to a width of 6 feet 3 inches. The daylight opening stops at a height of about 2 feet above the recent offset, and the inner face of walling thus formed is sharply splayed off. The scoinson arches are pointed, and are wrought with a vigorous half-engaged and sunk edge-roll, carried continuously down the jambs



so as to form nook-shafts. Between the windows the wall-faces are of fine diagonally-axed ashlar masonry in 10-inch courses, rather irregular in the length, and with very open joints; but the window bays are formed in rough rubble, the voussoirs being more finely wrought. The rybats are modern, having evidently been inserted in 1835-7, when the external openings of all the windows were refashioned. In the bays the irregular jointing where these rybats were worked into the ancient masonry is very evident.

One of the most remarkable and completely unexpected features exposed by the removal of the plaster is the fact that the scoinson arches of the windows all round the chancel have been framed in a very beautiful and dignified wall-arcade resting on long shafts carried up from the offset below the windows. The shafts have disappeared, but the arches are still in excellent preservation. These arches do not constitute a hood-mould, as the wall-face above is carried up flush with the advanced plane formed by the arcading. The arcade sits close to the scoinson arches of the windows, of which in effect it forms an outer order. On the side walls, where the windows are spaced apart, an acutely-pointed arch is inserted between each pair, and another of these acute arches is found at either end of each wall, those of the east end being of rather wider span. All the arches spring from caps for the most part utterly disfigured, except the two middle pairs on the south side, which fortunately are intact. They are plain bells, with a double annular moulding above and a bold rolled necking. These caps are not finished off below as



corbels, and the condition of their flat under-surfaces clearly shows that originally they surmounted disengaged wall-shafts. The height of these shafts would necessitate their being formed in two sections, connected by a band or intermediate cap. Fortunately evidence that this was the case can still be seen. In each of the four angles of the chancel the position of the intermediate cap, and also of the base (which was stilted), is distinctly visible, although they have been almost entirely hacked away; while in the eastmost bay on the north side another of these caps exists in a partly destroyed condition. The internal design of the chancel is thus revealed to have been uncommonly rich and spirited.<sup>20</sup> In general conception it somewhat recalls the very beautiful chancel (now restored) at Brechin Cathedral, dating about the same period. Here, as at Dornoch, the side walls of the chancel are carried out with tall and rather wide pointed windows resting on an offset and rising through the whole height of the walls, and, as at Dornoch, the scotches of these windows are framed into a moulded arcading supported on free shafts with caps, bands, and bases. But at Brechin, where the spaces between the windows are narrow, a cluster of three shafts occurs between each window. Also at Brechin the design is richer, the arcade having elaborate mouldings and dog-tooth ornament. None the less the resemblance between the two chancels is quite remarkable. In large churches of the early thirteenth century in Scotland, where the east end finishes without aisles—as in the presbyteries at Elgin, Arbroath, and St. Andrews—the usual method is to build up the

elevation in stories of windows with a mural arcade below, this being a survival from the Norman tradition. The plan adopted at Dornoch and Brechin of carrying up tall windows through the whole upper part of the elevation is quite distinctive. Unfortunately we have no evidence how the original east end at Brechin was treated.<sup>21</sup>

On the side walls the upper edge of the arcade is turned off in a broad quirked chamfer. On the gable this chamfer is replaced by a bold triple roll, producing a very fine effect. Above the arcade this gable has been rebuilt, and is set back some 5 inches. At this level roughly-formed pockets for beams were found in the gable and the side walls,<sup>22</sup> indicating doubtless the position of the ceilings inserted after 1775 and in 1816. Old stones, including some with moulded detail and others showing masons' marks, have been extensively used in the re-building. The upper light, which occurs in this part of the wall, has a plain scoinson arch and splayed jambs. Its sloped sill is new, a large hole in the masonry having been found here when the lath-and-plaster was removed, exposing the upper surface of the scoinson arch of the window below. As the rybats and exterior moulding of this upper window belong to the Victorian restoration, while in the scoinsons there is no clear evidence (such as exists in the other windows) of these rybats having been inserted, it might be thought that the rebuilding of the apex of the east gable, with its window, was done by Burn in 1835-7. This view appears to derive some support from the "stugging" with which many of the stones in jambs and scoinson



*Photo by W. Bremner*

CHANCEL OF THE CATHEDRAL



arch are dressed. On the other hand, the proportions of this upper window are so good that it is difficult to believe it can range in time with the spiritless Victorian work; and its general aspect seems to me to suggest that, though clearly a rebuilding, it is none the less ancient. Moreover, the roughly-formed pockets for joisting found in the rebuilt part of the gable require to be explained. They are older than Burn's plaster vault which masks them; and, as they are for the timbers of a flat ceiling, one naturally connects them with the ceiling erected as a result of the Exchequer grant in 1775, and renewed in 1816. But these pockets themselves were manifestly secondary work; and thus the gable in which they were formed, with its pointed window, may well be in substance much older, although clearly the window, like all the others, was a good deal operated on by Burn. As to its actual date no feature exists to afford a clue: the window might be a medieval reconstruction, or even part of the work carried out in the Caroline period.

Though naturally damaged in various places, the masonry of the chancel walls is generally in astonishingly good condition. A number of the stones show very marked traces of weathering, and it is clear that the chancel must have lain unroofed for a considerable time—no doubt between the destruction of 1570 and the Caroline restoration, a period long enough for such weathering to take place, particularly on stone work which had been exposed to fire. When the lath-and-plaster facing was removed, it was seen that at some previous time the ancient masonry had been



white-washed; and beneath the white-washing, on the north side, considerable traces of blackening with fire were noted. The fact that the walling below the windows is not of ashlar but of rubble suggests that this part of the chancel was originally plastered and painted. The south wall has settled slightly, and leans outward.

An interesting feature about the ancient work now exposed at Dornoch Cathedral is the existence of various irregularities in construction. None of the four great arches of the crossing are of uniform height, nor are the four piers quite accurately spaced. The difference in span thus caused has produced curious results in the springing of the arch-moulds. Only at the south-east pier do all the members come down to rest properly on the abacus. At the north-east pier the outer order of the east arch butts against that of the north arch and is lost; while the north arch itself similarly butts into and has its outer order truncated by the mouldings of the west or nave arch, the outer order of which in its turn is intercepted by that of the south arch. Similar minor irregularities are seen also in certain details of the chancel, for example, in the eastmost window on the north side, whose scotarch is a little more obtuse and therefore slightly lower than the others. Such divergencies from strict uniformity are quite in accordance with medieval building practice.

At present the transeptal gables show each a window of three pointed lights with a circular window above and a porch below. So far as the north gable is concerned this was not the ancient arrangement,



which is shown in Daniell's drawing, and consisted of two pointed lights with a third above, similar to the east gable. In the south transept the upper window is glazed, but masked by plaster inside. The upper window in the north transept gable is a false one, filled in with ashlar. Daniell's engraving shows a window in the west wall of this transept.

In the west gable of the nave is a large window of five pointed lights and unfoliated intersecting tracery beneath a pointed general arch. A window with five lights and basket tracery of the same type is shown here in Cordiner's engraving, but the style of dressing and appearance of the stonework of the present window shows that it was rebuilt at the restoration. At that time also the window was shortened by the introduction of a porch in the lower part of the gable, and its original proportions, as shown by Cordiner, were thus entirely destroyed. Below it, on the inside, a white marble tablet bears in plain black Roman lettering the inscription:—

THIS  
 ANTIENT CATHEDRAL  
 HAVING  
 FALLEN INTO DECAY AND RUIN  
 WAS RE-EDIFIED  
 DECORATED AND RESTORED  
 TO RELIGIOUS SERVICE  
 BY ELIZABETH  
 DUCHESS AND COUNTESS OF SUTHERLAND  
 IN THE YEARS  
 MDCCCXXXV, VI, & VII.  
 THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE

*Psalm XI.*

For the lost aisles of the nave, which were 14 feet wide,<sup>23</sup> the only authorities seem to be Cordiner's picture and the brief notes of Bishop Forbes and Bishop Pococke. The latter says: "In the eastern [*sic*] part, now uncovered, there are four arches on each side supported by round pillars with a kind of Gothic Doric capital." Bishop Forbes, who visited Dornoch on 3rd August, 1762, speaks of the "West End" as "ruinous: only the Gable-End and the two Side-Walls, with the 5 South Pillars, including the two in strong Basso Relievo in the two Gable-Ends, are still standing."<sup>24</sup> The south arcade as shown by Cordiner answers to these descriptions, plain cylindrical piers with square bases carrying on simple capitals plain pointed arches having splayed mouldings—all very like the nave arcade (1424-40) of St. Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen. There was no triforium, and the clerestory windows were square headed with round rear-arches. The aisle windows, apparently of a single light, had plain round arches. At the west end of the aisle was a plain pointed door in the south wall. One pier of the north arcade is shown by Cordiner as still erect, and is of multangular form, with a late capital.

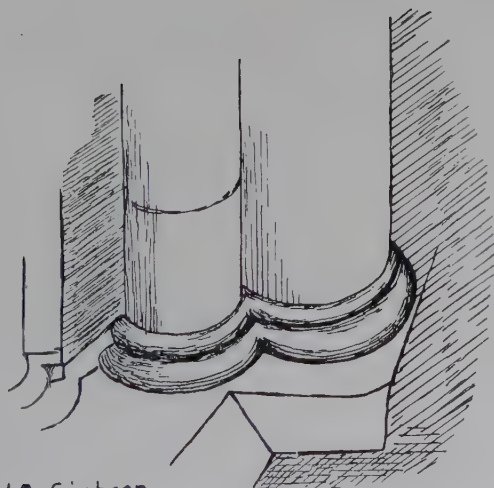
At the eaves all round the building are grotesque gargoyles. These form one of the puzzles of the Cathedral. It has been suggested that they are modern,<sup>25</sup> but except for the four pairs beneath the skew-putts of the gables, and one on the choir next the round staircase, they seem distinctly to be medieval. Their whimsical effectiveness and vigour

contrast utterly with the docile character of all the restoration work. The nine undoubtedly modern ones are quite different in treatment, and lack the intense virile spirit of the others : they are also less weathered. Moreover, the stone of the seemingly ancient gargoyles is much darker in tint. The modern ones, like all the Victorian stonework, are in a bright yellow freestone. If the visitor to the Cathedral take his stand on the parapet of the tower, in such a position that one of the supposed ancient gargoyles, with its dark colour and weathered surface, is seen against the background of one of the nineteenth century buttresses, built in bright yellow freestone and still sharp and distinct alike in outline and tooling—he will find it hard to persuade himself that the gargoyle is of the same recent date. On the other hand it is right to say that Mr Fred Nicholson, the present church officer of the Cathedral, clearly remembers how his grandmother used to tell him that the gargoyles “were carved in a shed beside the Bank, by a mason who had diabetes, and used to drink a pail of water at a time.” Of course this may refer to the nine gargoyles which undoubtedly are modern work. It is at all events obvious that those on the present nave, if they are ancient, must have been replaced there when this part of the church was rebuilt at the restoration.

The interior measurements of the church are as follows : length, 125 feet  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches ; breadth over transepts, 89 feet 7 inches ; length of chancel, 33 feet 6 inches ; breadth, 24 feet 2 inches ; length of transepts, 30 feet 8 inches ; breadth, 23 feet 9 inches ;

length of nave, 60 feet 10 inches; breadth 24 feet  $11\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The height of the spire is about 120 feet.

Within the church, at the west end of the nave, is preserved the effigy, formerly in the choir, of Sir Richard de Moravia, brother of Bishop Gilbert. He is said to have died fighting against the Norse at the battle of Embo, about 1245.<sup>26</sup> The effigy is a fine though mutilated specimen of the sepulchral art of the thirteenth century. Sir Richard is shown in recumbent posture, clad *cap-à-pie* in the armour of the period. His hauberk, of which the links have not been sculptured, is covered with an ample surcoat, reaching in graceful folds to just below the knee. The neck and arm-holes are wide, and the latter are prolonged downwards to a point. The border seems to be a plain ribbon. A close camail, drawn up over the chin, envelopes the head, the upper part of which is broken off. On the left side, just below the fracture, is a raised fillet which may be a head-band or the rim of a basinet. The features are wholly defaced. The right arm is broken off just below the shoulder: the left has been concealed beneath a large heater-shaped shield, now almost destroyed. The right leg, of which the lower part is gone, has been crossed over the left leg,<sup>27</sup> and has a plain garter below the knee. The left leg is complete save for part of the foot, which is garnished with the knightly prick-spur. Round the knight's waist is his sword-belt, showing a series of clasps or buckles. It droops to the sword, which lies from right to left across the wearer's middle. The sword is now much battered, but has a straight blade,



W.D. Simpson.

BASE OF PILLAR





downward quillons, and a heavy globular pommel. A small plain cushion supports the warrior's head, and his feet rest on the back of a lion *couchant*. The effigy, which measures 6 feet 11 inches long, is in yellow freestone, wrought with great spirit. The sarcophagus, rough-hewn out of a single block of the same stone, is 7 feet long, 2 feet 4 inches wide at the head, 1 foot 9 inches wide at the foot, and 1 foot 4 inches in height.

This effigy of Sir Richard is a remarkable thing, and no inapt symbol of the fate of the Cathedral whose vicissitudes it has shared through a period of seven hundred years. Like the Cathedral, it has been hacked and hashed about almost to the uttermost extent, it would seem, of which human malice and wantonness are capable; like the Cathedral, it is none the less still a thing instinct with noble beauty, breathing the mighty spirit of the thirteenth century, the grandest age of medieval Christendom. Like the Cathedral itself, the effigy in its present state teaches the great truth that it is almost impossible, short of total destruction, to obliterate a work of genius.

The lofty piers and arches of the crossing are undoubtedly Bishop Gilbert's work, and date from the early thirteenth century, or soon after his consecration to the diocese in 1223. Their clustered shafts and the bold, pointed, unfilleted rolls and deep cavettos of the pointed arch-mouldings are typical of the fully developed, but still early First Pointed style; while at the same time the square abaci retain the influence of the preceding Norman style. All this

work is bold in conception, and the handling is masterly—fully equal to the best Transitional work anywhere else in Scotland. The details of the chancel show that the whole of this part of the church, except the gable, is also Bishop Gilbert's work, but slightly later in feeling than the tower piers. The caps lack the Transitional square abaci, and all the other details are of the mature Early English style. The whole design is one of exceptional spirit, beauty, and constructional interest. Bishop Gilbert would take a close personal interest in the building operations, and Sir Robert Gordon tells us how "all the glasse that served this church when it wes built, wes maid by Sainct Gilbert his appoyntment besyd Sideray, tuo myles by west Dornogh."<sup>28</sup>

In substance the tower above may belong to the same period; but the parapet, with its bartisans resting on continuous corbels, is clearly much later work. This part of the tower no doubt was altered at the time of the Caroline restoration. The allure-walk and the coping of the parapet evidently date from 1835-7: the coping is identical with that found on the annexes built at the same period into the re-entrant angles of the choir and transepts, and is shown in Burn's measured drawings.<sup>29</sup> The annexe in the angle between the nave and the north transept is topped with a plain blocking-course, and may be an afterthought.

The handsome broach spire resembles in a general way that shown in Daniell's engraving, which is doubtless the spire erected in 1728. But it is

depicted in the engraving with lucarnes in the diagonal faces instead of the present dormers in the front faces, and with a ball surmounted by a long cross in place of the present weather-cock. These differences suggest that the spire was remodelled in 1835-7: and Mr Nicholson informs me that the tradition in his family is that the spire was slated at that time by one Donald Mann, from Spinningdale.<sup>30</sup> Daniell's engraving must clearly be used with caution, as it represents the great west window with six instead of five lights. The engraving shows two oblong windows in the infilling which then blocked the arch between the crossing and the ruined nave. On the bell is the inscription W<sup>M</sup>. MEARS . OF . LONDON . FECIT . 1785.

A late pre-Reformation date is suggested by the tracery of the west window and the character of the nave arcade as shown by Cordiner. The basket tracery of the window is common in fifteenth and sixteenth century work. From this evidence it seems very probable that the body of the Cathedral was not completed until long after Bishop Gilbert's time. Nor is documentary confirmation altogether lacking in support of this view. A bond of manrent, given by William Sutherland of Duffus to Alexander Gordon, Master of Sutherland, dated 4th September, 1529, assigns as a penalty to be paid by Sutherland or his heirs for breaking "ony punt of the premisses," a sum of £500, to the "operation and edification of the cathedrall kirk of Cathness."<sup>31</sup> A date about this period would well suit the style of the

nave arcade and west window as shown by Cordiner. But on the other hand the sum might have been payable to a general repair or maintenance fund, such as that provided for by Bishop Gilbert in his foundation charter. An earlier bequest of the same nature occurs in 1456, when Alexander Sutherland of Dunbeath granted a capital sum for the repairs of St. Gilbert's church.<sup>32</sup> In a deed of Bishop Robert Stewart, dated 1557, repairs latterly done to the Cathedral are mentioned.<sup>33</sup> The cumulative evidence certainly suggests that building was in progress in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

All the rest of the building seems to be modern, or modernised beyond recognition, and is in the worst possible style of nineteenth century anæmic Gothic. Any other ancient masonry that may exist is concealed beneath the exterior harling and the liberal coats of plaster and yellow-wash which have been applied to all the internal walls, giving a jaundiced aspect to the inward views of the edifice. Yet even in its mutilated degradation Dornoch Cathedral is still a fine church, chiefly owing to the very beautiful proportions which the modernised building has inherited from its medieval predecessor. The martial tower, with its battlement, bartisans, and broach spire, has a most effective and pleasing appearance. The east end with its four grouped lights is a noble composition, and despite its truncated condition there is dignity in the west window. In the interior of the church the grand, massive piers, clustered shafts, heavy oversailing capitals and soaring, richly-moulded arches of

the crossing combine with the delicate and graceful design of the chancel to form one of the noblest fragments of medieval architecture extant in the north of Scotland.

To the north of the choir was the chapter-house, described as an oblong vaulted building, the last remnants of which were removed in 1813.<sup>34</sup> On the south side of the nave stood a detached chapel, which served as the burial place of the Gordons of Embo : its ruins were demolished in the restoration of 1835-7.<sup>35</sup> The south transept of the Cathedral, which formed the ancient burial place of the Earls of Sutherland, was known as St. James's or Our Lady's Aisle. Some confusion has arisen in connection with this aisle. It has been held that the "south ile of the church of Dornogh, which is the sepulture of your ancestors," and which Sir Robert Gordon, in his letter of advice to his nephew, the young Earl of Sutherland, *circa* 1625, desired him to "repair and decore," was the south aisle of the nave. But Sir Robert's words make it abundantly clear, in my opinion, that he meant the south transept. "Erect ther a monument and a tombe for them and yourself, if it be not performed to your hand, and cause paint about the inner walls of that ile, or vpon the selerine thereoff, the portraitours and pictoures of all the Earles of Southerland with the soume of their lyfs from the beginning."<sup>36</sup> These words, I submit, could refer only to the south transept. They could not possibly be applied to the south aisle of the nave, a long narrow structure with a lean-to roof (if at that

time it had one at all), a roof in any event totally unsuited for such a scheme of decoration, and open moreover, since the catastrophe of 1605, through the arcade of the roofless nave to all the blasts of heaven. The tradition in the Sutherland family has always been that the ancient burial place was in the south transept—as stated in the tablet now inserted in its east wall.<sup>37</sup> As to the use of the word “aisle,” in old Scots this was regularly applied to any limb of a “cross church”: we read, for example, in 1786 of “ane midden within the west aisle of the Broken Kirk of Dornoch”—by which of course the ruined nave is meant.<sup>38</sup> The fact that there was an altar in St. James’s Aisle has been claimed as proof that it lay east and west: but altars against the east wall of a transept, often in special transeptal chapels, were universal in large medieval churches.

A close study of Burn’s original drawings reveals very clearly the much more radical treatment which, if he had been given his way, would have been inflicted upon the Cathedral. His plans provide for vestry adjuncts in the east angles of the transepts and choir, upon a much larger scale than those actually built, and without external doors. At present the doors opening from the chancel into the vestries are placed opposite each other near the east walls of the vestries. On the proposed plan the door into the north vestry is shown at the opposite end of it, hard up against the north-east pier of the crossing. This would have brought the access out into the position of the ancient spiral stair, which it was evidently pro-



posed to clear away. The present door into the north vestry doubtless represents the ancient access to the chapter-house; and the door to the spiral stair, and that to the little chamber under it, must have opened from the chapter-house or the passage leading to it—otherwise these doors are left “in the air.”

No building of any kind is shown in the north-west re-entrant, and it appears (as pointed out above) that the small adjunct now found here, and used as a coal hole, is a more recent insertion. The plans show doors only in the transept gables, instead of the porches which in the event were built; but a large porch was to have been erected at the west gable of the nave. The transept gables were to have been rebuilt with three pointed windows set close together, the central one slightly higher, and no opening above. Worst of all, the beautiful east gable was to have been entirely refashioned, with two pointed lights set close together and a sunk circular moulded recess above—the arrangement eventually adopted in the transept gables as they now stand. The drawings display five side windows in the nave, whereas only four were actually built. Instead of the replica of the ancient basket-traceried window ultimately made, the west gable was planned with three pointed windows, a central large one flanked by smaller ones, all set close together. Large moulded pointed windows were to have been inserted in the tower, and the plain runnels of its parapet were to be replaced by grotesques. Lucarnes in the intermediate faces of the spire, as well as the dormers now visible in the four fronts,

were to have been constructed. Spirally moulded chimney-stalks of Tudor fashion, strange beasts crawling down the buttress-intakes, and doorways of bastard Perpendicular style, with elliptic arches, would have completed the transmogrification of the edifice. Within, a plaster vault was planned of more elaborate design than that now existing: it was to have liernes or intermediate ribs. It must be confessed that the present ceiling, when once its sham nature is conceded, and apart from its hideous yellow tint, is not a bad piece of design. The curious arched recesses sunk in the nave walls between the windows, perhaps for acoustic purposes, are not indicated in the sectional drawings. In the drawing for the interior fittings the same debased style appears as in all the architectural work.

In one or two points the drawings afford information in regard to the ancient building. The old walls are shown in dark tint outlined in red. It thus appears that the general arrangement of the windows in the walls of the chancel and in the east walls of the transepts was to have been retained, although in some cases the windows were to have been slightly displaced. In the north transept gable the ancient arrangement, as we have seen, comprised two pointed lights below a third. The two lower lights are shown in the plan, along with the three modern ones that have replaced them. The plan also shows two ancient windows in the south transept gable, the original elevation of which was doubtless similar to that of the north gable. The present windows in the west walls

of the transepts are shown as modern, the plan indicating only one ancient window in the north transept on this side. Of course the nave aisles had butted against the exterior of these walls.

The plan indicates that anciently the angles of the transepts and choir were finished off without buttresses. This is interesting, as the ruined nave shown in Daniell's drawing has a buttressed gable. We may take this as another link in the chain of cumulative evidence suggesting a later date for the nave than for the choir and transepts.

According to the plan the ancient walls of the chancel and transepts were to have been masked by a new facing six inches thick. So far as the transept gables are concerned, this has been carried out in ashlar work: but the side walls of the choir and both transepts, and the gable of the former, are harled, and indications visible beneath the harling suggest that in these walls the original rubble masonry of small-work has not been materially disturbed.

The following is a note of the old tombstones built into the walls of the Cathedral:—

I. In the south wall of the nave, next the south transept, are found fragments of a large mural monument, consisting of a slab flanked by fluted pilasters all resting on a projecting moulded base. The inscription has been cut on two stones, an upper and a lower, only a fragment of the lower stone being preserved. The shape of the top of the upper stone shows that the monument was pedimented.

This monument was Erect  
 ed by Joh: McKay of Tordaroeh  
 Ann: Dom: 1752, in memory of the follow  
 ing persons of Distinction viz: m<sup>r</sup> Jo: Gray 3rd  
 son to Gilbert Gray of Skibo by chri: Munro  
 Daugh: to the Laird of Fowles, who was first  
 protestant Dean of sutherland & Caithness & was  
 first married to Barbra Keith Daugh: to Ludquhar  
 By whom he had several sons & a Daugh:  
 named Chri: & was thereafter married to Elis  
 Dowglass Daugh: to spynie and Relict to m<sup>r</sup>  
 Jo: Dunbar Parson of Duffus, who was  
 Grandchild by m<sup>r</sup> Pat: Dunbar his 4th son to  
 The Laird of Killbuiack of this . . . .

*(lower half, fragment)*

marriage was bego . . .  
 of siddera who ma . . . . .  
 John Grays Daugh . . . . .  
 got Pat: Dunbar . . . . .  
 name, who marri . . . . .  
 sie, who be. . . . .  
 Hugh McK . . . . .  
 ay of To . . . . .

The over-all dimensions of the stone are: breadth, including plinth, 4 feet; height, 3 feet 5 inches. Mr Fred Nicholson remembers having seen this stone built into its present site about half a century ago.

II. Immediately west of the above stone is an oblong panel with shouldered and semi-circular pedimented head. In the head is a sunk panel within a moulded frame. On it are carved in relief two shields side by side. The dexter one is charged with three stars, for Murray, while the sinister one bears a lion rampant for Gray, between three stars for Murray.

Below are incised J. M. 1758 J. G. On the panel is the legend :

This Tomb Stone points out  
The Burial place of the  
Family of Pulrosie Erected  
in 1757 By John Murray  
of Pulrosie and his spouse  
Jean<sup>39</sup> Gray daughter of  
. . . . .<sup>40</sup> Gray of Overskibo.

The lower part of the stone is badly weathered and rapidly spalling away. Its dimensions are : height, 2 feet 2 inches; breadth, 1 foot 5 inches.

The four following stones were built into the interior walls of the chancel, and were discovered when the plaster was stripped off in March, 1924 :—

III. In the east wall of the chancel is a stone 1 ft. in height by 11 inches in breadth, circular in shape but rising into a pointed ogee arch above. The base is cut off. The stone has an edge-roll, enclosing a panel which is slightly sunk, and displays the following inscription in incised letters painted black :—

Below  
this is Mrs  
McKays grave as  
mentioned in y<sup>e</sup>  
inscription on y<sup>e</sup>  
North Wall.

IV. The stone referred to is an oblong slab measuring 2 feet 2½ inches in height and 1 foot 1 inch in breadth. It has a semi-circular pediment upon which is carved a winged head with the date 1790. Below this the main portion of the stone is divided into two panels by an ornament resembling a necklace

of small cylindrical beads with larger round beads strung between every pair. The upper panel bears the letters :

G	MK
K	M

1790

The letters MK are ligatured. A heart is carved between each pair of initials. The lower panel shows the usual gruesome emblems of mortality in vogue at the period—the hour-glass, coffin, bell, spade, crossed bones, and spade. The lettering and dates are incised, while the sculpturing is in bold relief. The whole is wrought on a sunk panel within a moulded frame, and the pediment has an edge-roll.

V. Opposite to this stone in the south wall of the chancel is a stone of somewhat similar design, in three panels. The stone is square-headed, and the upper panel has an elliptic top with rosettes in the spandrils. The upper two panels have moulded frames, but the lower one is merely sunk. The sculpture is in high relief, while the lettering is incised. On the uppermost panel is carved a winged head and date 1782. The middle panel shows the initials :

G	G
I	G
G	R.

Between these initials is carved a heart ensigned with a crown. The height of this stone is 2 feet 4 inches, and its breadth 1 foot  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch.

VI. Eastward from the above stone is found a large mural monument in the form of an oblong stone, 3



feet 3 inches tall and 2 feet  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches broad, with a flattish ogee arched top. On the stone is incised the following legend :—

This Stone is Erected  
here by M<sup>r</sup> GEORGE JAFFRAY  
in memory of his beloved  
SPouse HENRETA MORISON<sup>41</sup>  
who deParted this life  
on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1818  
AGED 63 years. Much  
lamented By Hir Family  
And All Hir Acquaintance  
And of HIS son GEORGE who  
deParted this life on the  
2<sup>nd</sup> March 1817 AGED  
21 years ALSO of HIS  
DAUGHTER RACHEL Who  
departed this life on the  
5<sup>th</sup> March 1818 AGED  
34 years.<sup>42</sup>

VII. There remains to be noted the stone referred to above as having been found in the churchyard and now built for preservation into the infilling of the arched recess on the south side of the chancel. The stone measures 27 ins. by  $14\frac{1}{2}$  ins., and is surrounded by a plain moulded border. It is uninscribed, and displays the usual ghastly emblems—two skulls, two thigh-bones, two coffins, two spades, an hour-glass, and a hand ringing a bell.

All these stones are carved in the usual yellow freestone of the district. What other fragments of the Cathedral and its monuments may be yet lying scattered about the good town of Dornoch it is impos-

sible to say, but a systematic search of the old walls and gardens might yield fruitful results. Built into the coping of a wall on the south side of Castle Street opposite the old Deanery is what appears to be the head of an effigy. The face is entirely defaced, but seems to be wearing a cowl or cap with hood, possibly a helmet and hood of mail. The height of the head and shoulders, so far as preserved, is 1 foot 4 inches, and the breadth across the shoulders is 1 foot 3 inches. Part of a moulded stone may also be seen in a wall beside the house of Tordarroch: it seems to have been a portion of a cornice with crockets of late design.

Irreparable though we must account the damage wrought by the misguided restorers of 1835-7, it is a pleasure to note how much has been done of recent years to destroy the worst effects of bad taste and vandalism, and to recover for the ancient church some measure of its former glory. And there remains always this solid ground of consolation: the church is a church in being, still fulfilling the purpose for which its pious founder provided seven long centuries ago —“a testimony to the reality and endurance of the things that really matter, and to the essential unity of the faith we profess.”<sup>43</sup> No longer is it merely “The Broken Kirk of Dornoch.”

I am greatly obliged to my friend Mr J. Fenton Wyness, F.S.A. Scot., who has prepared the beautiful ground plan under my direction and from my own measurements.

*CHAPTER XI*

## OLD HOUSES AND FAMILIES

## SKIBO CASTLE

SKIBO CASTLE was included in the grant of lands made by Hugo Freskyn in 1211 to his kinsman, Gilbert, Archdeacon of Moray, who probably made it his home after his appointment to the bishopric of Caithness in 1223. In the agreement concluded in 1275 between Bishop Archibald and the Earl of Sutherland regarding certain lands in dispute, the "castle of Schythebolle" was assigned, among other properties, to the bishop and his successors. Even after the erection of the Bishop's Palace at Dornoch in the sixteenth century, it continued to be a residence of the bishops. In 1455 Bishop Mudy appointed his brother-german, Gilbert, to the constableness of his castles of Skibo and Scrabster. In 1544 the castle was captured by Mackay of Strathnaver, but it was retaken by Captain James Cullen. It appears in various grants of the sixteenth century, and in the new grant of the Earldom of Sutherland in 1601.

A letter incorporated in a charter of Bishop Robert Stewart shows that in the sixteenth century Skibo Castle was a thatched dwelling, and that it was in a sad state of disrepair. Sir Robert Gordon records the fact that Skibo Castle and Dornoch Cathedral were

the first buildings that were roofed with the new slate he found in a neighbouring quarry in the seventeenth century. It was fitting that they should be thus associated, in view of the close connection that existed between them from the thirteenth century until the abolition of Episcopacy in 1688. Skibo Castle appears to have been the favourite episcopal residence of the diocese. Bishop Pococke visited it in 1760, and thus refers to it in his narrative:—"It was a castle and country seat of the bishops of Cathness, very pleasantly situated over a hanging ground which was improved into a very good garden, and remains to this day much in the same state, except that there are walls built, which produce all sorts of fruit in great perfection, and I believe not more than six weeks later than about London." Pennant included it in his tour of 1769, and makes reference to it as "the bishop's summer residence."

The Gray family was that most intimately associated with Skibo Castle in its earlier days. Its progenitor was Sir William Gray, Chantor of Ross, whose two sons were legitimised in a precept granted at St. Andrews on 5th June, 1539. The older one, John, became hereditary constable of Skibo Castle, and its lands were feued to him. In 1565 Bishop Robert Stewart assigned the castle to John Gray. In 1570 John Gray of Skibo, Chamberlain to Robert, Bishop of Caithness, and his son, Gilbert, "retired to St. Andrews there to wait until they might return to Skibo without danger." This was after the burning of Dornoch by the Mackays of Strathnaver. Gilbert

was his son by his second wife, Elizabeth Barclay, daughter of the laird of Pitgarthie. He was first married to Janet Matheson, sister of Sir John Matheson, Chancellor of Caithness. He died at Skibo in 1586, and was buried at Dornoch. His son Gilbert, who succeeded him, was Chantor of Caithness, but resigned his office in 1583, and died at Skibo on October 3, 1624. He, too, was twice married, and had eight sons and one daughter, Janet, who married William Cuthbert, Provost of Inverness. The most outstanding member of his family was John Gray, who became Dean of Caithness in 1608, tutored the young Earl of Sutherland, and was mainly responsible for the partial restoration of the Cathedral after its destruction by fire. Gilbert Gray was succeeded in 1624 by his oldest son, George, whose first wife was Jean, daughter of John Gordon of Embo, who died in childbed in 1612. Sir Robert Gordon pays her a tribute in which he says:—"Shoe wes in hospitality and sundrie other vertues nothing inferior to any in that cuntrey : as much lamented by her friends and all other cuntriemen as any gentlewoman that died in Southerland these many yeirs, and chieflie shoe wes exceidinglie bewailed and regrated by her husband, who through the love and affection which he did cary unto her and to the children which he had by her, did not marie agane for seaven yeirs after her death." He died on July 11th, 1629, "to the great regrait of all the inhabitants of that countrey and the adjacent shires wher he had bene a good patriot dureing his days," as Sir Robert records.

Robert, his oldest son, succeeded him, and, as the nearest heir to his grandfather, he had sasine, dated at Dornoch, 19th April, 1634, from John, Earl of Sutherland, of the lands of Alustie, Ardalies, and others. He married Jean Seton, a niece of the Earl of Winton, by whom he had three sons and four daughters. It was she who entertained at Skibo, in 1651, the ill-fated Marquis of Montrose after his capture, and who insulted the officer in command of his guard by throwing a roasted leg of mutton at his head, as she exclaimed: "If ye dinna ken ye're manners an ye're place, I'll mak ye." Her husband was heavily fined for her offence. Gilbert Gray, his eldest son, was served heir to his father on 25th February, 1693. He made generous provision for his family of three sons and four daughters during his lifetime, and he died before 14th July, 1716. His oldest son and successor, George Gray, married three times. His second wife was a niece of Viscount Stair, and bore him two daughters, the younger of whom married John Mackay of Tordarroch. His third wife was Isobel, third daughter of the laird of Newmore, and their oldest son, Robert, succeeded his father. He was served heir-male to his grandfather in Skibo Castle and Mains in 1737. His two half-sisters, Isobel and Jean, along with the latter's husband, raised an action against him in 1740, charging him to enter himself as heir to his father, whereupon he raised a process for the recovery of family documents and the banner of the hereditary constable of Skibo, which bore the armorial bearings of the family



and the motto "Constant." The legal proceedings thus instituted cost him his inheritance, which he had to surrender in 1744, owing to bonds with which the property was burdened. He thereupon resumed his military career, and died without issue on 12th April, 1776. His family's long connection with Skibo ceased with him.

Skibo now passed into the hands of Sir Patrick Dowall, Edinburgh, whose nephew, the Hon. George Mackay, son of Lord Reay, became laird of Skibo in 1751. He represented the county of Sutherland in Parliament for a short time, and during his occupancy of Skibo he effected great improvements on the property. The older portions of its woods were planted by him. He got into financial straits and he had to dispose of his property. It was purchased by William Gray, a member of the old Skibo family, who had made a fortune in Jamaica. In 1769 the castle was renovated. Pennant, who saw it soon thereafter, records in his journal that at Skibo "a house was lately built in a very elegant taste." In 1786 the property again changed hands, and was acquired by George Dempster of Dunnichen, Forfarshire, whose brother about the same time purchased the adjoining estates of Pulrossie and Overskibo. In his article on Dornoch in the *New Statistical Account for Scotland*, the Rev. Angus Kennedy says that "they were much respected by all ranks; and, as landlords, they were kind and indulgent to their tenants." Mr George Dempster died in 1818, at the age of eighty-six. Skibo remained in the possession of his family until it

was purchased by Mr Evan C. Sutherland, who renovated and enlarged the castle, and made other improvements on his estate. In 1895 it became the property of Mr Andrew Carnegie, the great philanthropist, who erected the magnificent castle that now adorns the ancient site. Skibo was one of Mr Carnegie's most valued possessions, and he made it his home for a great part of each year. When, owing to advancing years and infirmity, he was no longer able to visit Skibo, it was much in his thoughts and lay near to his heart. After a wonderful day and a happy eventide, he passed to his rest at Shadowbrook, U.S.A., in August, 1919. His widow, Mrs Louise Whitfield Carnegie, has retained possession of Skibo, which is endeared to her by many tender associations and happy memories. A golden link was, happily, forged between the thirteenth and twentieth century owners of Skibo when, at the Cathedral Septcentenary celebrations on August 27th, 1924, Mrs Carnegie unveiled the mural tablet erected in the chancel of Dornoch Cathedral to the memory of the saintly Bishop Gilbert.

#### DORNOCH CASTLE

Dornoch Castle was built as a residence for the bishops in the sixteenth century, and to Dean Hepburn has been given the credit for its erection. The earliest documentary evidence of the existence of a Bishop's Palace at Dornoch occurs in a charter of 1557, by which Bishop Robert Stewart appointed the Earl of Sutherland and his heirs hereditary constables of the Palace of Dornoch. It was



*Photo. by Gillespie*

DORNOCH CASTLE



besieged in 1570 by the Mackays, when the gallant defenders of Dornoch held out for a week against the efforts of their assailants to storm the Castle and Cathedral Tower. On that occasion the Cathedral and town were burnt, as Sir Robert Gordon records, and, though no mention is made of the Bishop's Palace having suffered in the conflagration, it could hardly have escaped damage by fire, and traces of burning have recently been discovered. That it could not have been destroyed to any extent is proved by the fact that its defenders were not compelled to evacuate it, and by Sir Robert Gordon's silence regarding such a calamity. Any damage done to the fabric must have been inconsiderable, as in the early seventeenth century it was habitable, and, having been conveyed by Bishop Robert to the Earl of Sutherland, it became his residence in Dornoch. Within its walls John, 13th Earl of Sutherland, entertained the Earl of Orkney in 1604, and there he died in 1615. In the following year it became the home of his son and successor during his stay of seven years at Dornoch, where he was educated under the care of Dean Gray. Though the Earls were the custodians of the castle and used it as a residence, the Bishops still reserved their right to occupy it when visiting their diocese, and in charters granted to the Earls, in 1606 by Bishop Forbes and in 1626 by Bishop Abernethy, it is designated the Palace of Dornoch. Lord Strathnaver expended 2300 merks upon an extensive repair of the fabric in 1720; but in 1760 it was in a ruinous condition, probably owing to its occupation by the Earl of

Cromartie's troops in 1746. Bishop Forbes, in the narrative of his visit to Dornoch in 1760, describes it as ruinous, and says he found a blacksmith's forge in one of the vaults. Bishop Pococke describes it as "a solid high building, consisting of four floors above the arched offices on which it was built." There is a tradition to the effect that it was built upon piles to render the foundation more secure. It was still in ruins when Pennant visited Dornoch in 1769. In that condition it seems to have remained until 1812, when extensive repairs were carried out under the direction of Mr Young of Inverugie, the Marquis of Stafford's Commissioner. Its formation was altered to conform to a design that was commonly adopted for baronial houses at that time.

Dr Douglas Simpson in his article on "The Palace of the Bishops of Caithness at Dornoch" in *Scottish Notes and Queries* of June, 1925, says regarding the original structure:—"The palace is described as having formed a courtyard, of which the building still extant formed the south side, with its tall flanking tower or wing at the south-west corner. . . . East and west were ranges of offices, or 'laigh-biggings,' and on the north side the courtyard was closed in by a high curtain wall with a gatehouse. There is said to have been three towers in all." The offices appear to have been converted into dwellings for the poorer people in the eighteenth century, and these, with the north wall and gateway, were cleared away in the alterations of 1812, while the remaining tower was roofed and a modern house was erected on the old



foundations of the south wall of the original structure, the old chimney being retained.

Dr Simpson's description of the castle as it stands to-day is so good that, with his permission, it is here given:—"The door is in the round tower, and is straight-headed, with a half-engaged roll set on a chamfer, continued round the lintel and jambs. A short passage, carried under the ascending steps, leads through to a corridor traversing the main house from east to west, and serving the various apartments in the basement, which have all been cellars except the large kitchen at the east end. This kitchen still retains its huge arched fireplace, about 11 feet 6 inches broad, which has been partly built up. Outside the chimney projects as a great breast, and is reduced by a stepped intaking at the old roof level, forming a picturesque and truly monumental feature of the building. All these apartments in the basement are vaulted, and some of the doors are moulded in a fashion not usual in the cellarage. In the tower at this level are found crosslet loops with an oilette termination below. On the first floor there was originally a fine hall, about 39 feet by 21, in the eastern part of the main house, having a withdrawing room beside it to the west, and a private room adjoining in the wing. These rooms are now much altered, and cut up by partitions. Recently a moulded jamb of the old fireplace in the west wall of the hall, with clustered and filleted shafts and caps finely wrought, has been exposed. . . . The main house was finished all with plain, high pitched gables and roof. The

buttress and round tower in the south front are modern, the latter dating from 1881. . . . The wing and stair tower are carried up two full stories higher, and the former finished picturesquely with crow-stepped gables, the crow-steps of which themselves have gablets, as sometimes occurs in late work. At the angles are open bartisans resting upon continuous corbellings, very similar to those found on the cathedral tower. The corbelling of the south-west turret has sprung from a human mask. An interesting and very beautiful feature of the castle is the pronounced entasis or batter which is found both on the wing and on the great chimney.”

The reconstructed castle was used as a Court House and Jail from 1813 to 1850, and in its tower Hugh Macleod, the Assynt murderer, was confined in 1830, previous to his removal to Inverness for trial. The castle was afterwards modernised internally, and became a shooting-lodge. In 1922 it was purchased by Mrs Sykes of Borroboll, who, with a fine appreciation of its historic interest and antiquity, has done much, by extensive additions and alterations in harmony with its original style of architecture, to invest the ancient Bishop's Palace with some measure of its former dignity and character. It is an interesting fact that, during the five centuries of its existence, this historic building has been owned by only three proprietors, inasmuch as it passed from the Church into the hands of the Sutherland family, whose connection with it ceased only when, a few years ago, it became the property of its present owner.

## SKELBO CASTLE

The ruins of Skelbo Castle occupy a commanding position overlooking Loch Fleet. Dr Simpson, Aberdeen, who carefully explored the ruins, describes the site as "a fine example of an early Norman fortress of the mount-and-bailey type." The more ancient ruins are those of a square keep, of which only a section of the north wall now remains. It is of two storeys, neither of which is vaulted. Outside the wall an annexe had been built, to which access, according to Dr Simpson, was "obtained apparently by a door slapped through from the basement, and by another door opening from the annexe into a mural garderobe on the first floor of the keep." A curtain wall descends from the keep eastward to what seems to have been the gatehouse at the south-east corner of the courtyard, where there are traces of a round tower. The west curtain extends beyond the keep, and "has had a building against it with a postern (afterwards built up) in the shoulder." At the south-west corner of the courtyard stands the ruin of a plain oblong building of two storeys, dating from the 17th century, which Dr Simpson describes as "a dignified example of the latest development of Scottish baronial architecture, when the castellated features, such as corbelled turrets, were being dropped."

Dr Simpson, who is an acknowledged authority on medieval architecture, gives his verdict as to the age of the older ruins in the following passage from his article on "Skelbo Castle" in *Scottish Notes and Queries* of October, 1924:—"The original masonry

of the castle shows a very marked character, and bears evidence of considerable antiquity. It is strongly built of horizontal slabs low in the course, with wide joints infilled by rough mortar in which shells have been freely used. Occasionally it is varied by large boulders. As to the date of this original stonework it is hard to form an opinion, owing to the absence of mouldings or other distinctive detail. The type of castle, with its keep-tower and barmkin wall, is one that came into use during the 14th century, after the War of Independence. The simplicity of the design, the scarcity of mural chambers, and the character of the masonry might well betoken this century. On the other hand, the walls are thinner than usual in castles of that date; but this might be accounted for by the uncommon strength and inaccessibility of the site, the walls being everywhere built along steep banks that rendered mining or battering operations impossible. The lack of vaulting in the keep is paralleled by other 14th century castles in the north, such as Forse, Braal and Oldwick. From the absence of bonding between the curtain walls and the keep, and the fact that the lean-to structure against the west wall, though abutting on the keep, is built with a thick gable of its own, it may be conjectured that the curtain walls were the first to be built, while the mount still retained its timber superstructure, and that the latter was replaced by the stone tower. This was quite a usual mode of procedure. A large section of the north curtain has been rebuilt in masonry of a quite different aspect,

exhibiting the rubble-work with frequent small pinnings, usual in 16th-17th century work in the north. The same kind of stone-work appears in the house on the west side.”

The first mention of Skelbo occurs in a charter by which Hugo Freskyn, c. 1211, granted his lands of Skelbo to his kinsman, Gilbert de Moravia, Archdeacon of Moray, who, twelve years after, became Bishop of Caithness, and in 1235 made over Skelbo to his brother. Sir Richard de Moravia was in residence at Skelbo when, c. 1245, the Thane of Sutherland assigned to him the task of holding in check the Norsemen, who had landed at Unes. This he nobly did, but in the ensuing battle of Embo he was slain. The castle from which he went forth to fight the Vikings would have been constructed of earth and timber. On Sunday, October 1, 1290, the English and Scottish Commissioners appointed to meet the Maid of Norway held a conference in Skelbo Castle, and there they received the sad tidings of her death on the voyage from Norway to Orkney. In 1330 Kenneth, Earl of Sutherland, granted to Reginald, son and heir of the deceased Alan Moray of Culbyn, whose son Gilbert married Eustachia, eldest daughter of the Earl, certain lands declared by Sir Robert Gordon to have been those of Skelbo. Before the end of the 15th century it passed into the hands of the Kynnard family through the marriage, about 1440, of Thomas Kynnard to Egidia, daughter and heiress of Walter Moray of Culbin and Skelbo, and was held in succession by Alane, John and Thomas of Kynnard.

In 1494 the Lords of Council found that John, Earl of Sutherland, had wrongly taken and withheld the castle and place of Skelbo, and also two children of John of Moray, and ordered him to deliver the castle to Thomas Kynnard of that ilk, to be held by him according to his charter and seisin which he had produced before the Lords. They also ordained that he should immediately liberate the children, and should pay to Thomas Kynnard one hundred merks Scots for his "dampning and Scathis" (*Acta Dom. Council*). That same year William Keith appeared before the Lords Auditors as procurator for Marjory Mowat, widow of the deceased John of Kynnard, demanding redress for the injury done her by Thomas of Kynnard in "falsing the charters and letters made to her of the castell and place of Skelbow, and occupying and labouring the demesne lands of the same for that year, and for withholding the dues." Thomas Kynnard alleged that the charter and seisin of conjunct infeftment of the said castle and lands made to John Kynnard and Marjory by the deceased Alane Kynnard of that ilk, dated 15th January, 1486, were false, and sealed after Alane's decease (*Acta Dom. Aud.*). In 1518 Andrew Kynnard took seisin of the lands and castle of Skelbo "at the top of the stair ascending to the tower of the castle," and in 1525 John Kynnard, son of the deceased Andrew, took seisin of the same castle and lands in the hall of the castle.

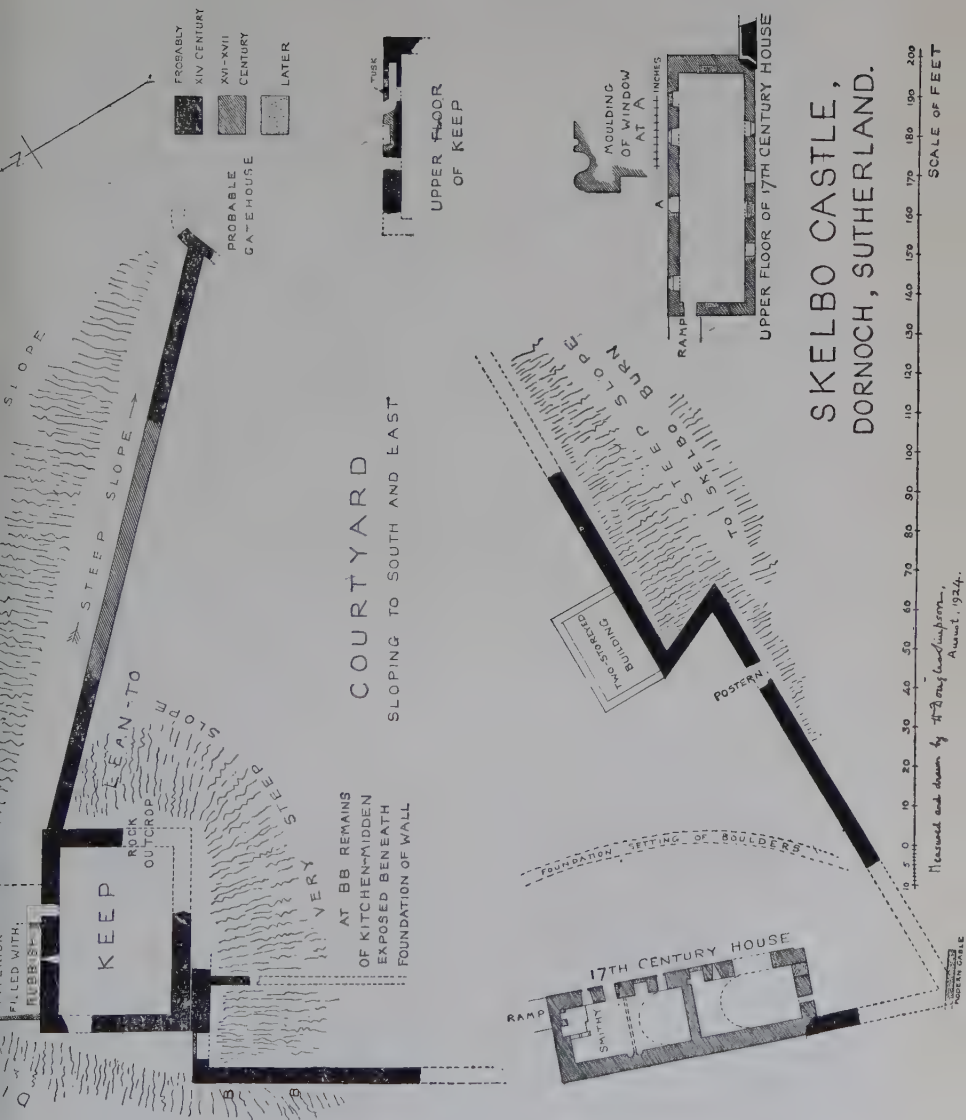
In 1529 John Kynnard sold the castle and lands to William Sutherland of Duffus, whose bailie, John Murray of Campbussy, received a black ox with grey



horns as evidence of the sasine. In 1545 Master John Sutherland is designated "Captain of Skelbo" in the Register of Moray. Alexander Sutherland was a minor at his succession in 1549, and received a charter of all his lands from Queen Mary in 1563, after the Earl of Sutherland's forfeiture of his estates for treason. His younger brother, William Sutherland of Evelix, was prominent in the burning of Dornoch in 1570, and he it was who desecrated the relics of St. Gilbert. Alexander married Janet, daughter of James Grant of Freuchie, and their eldest son, Alexander, succeeded his father while he was still in nonage. The protocol book of William Gray contains the record of a transaction which took place in 1564 in Alexander Sutherland's "chalmer within the castell of Skelbo." He married Lady Elizabeth Sinclair, daughter of the Earl of Caithness, and, dying without issue, he was succeeded, before 1579, by his brother William, who married a younger daughter of the Earl of Caithness. Their marriages were arranged in terms of an agreement between their father and the Earl of Caithness.

On Sunday, June 10th, 1621, Skelbo Castle was invested by the Gordons of Embo and their supporters, who gathered in force to avenge the wounding of young Embo by the Sutherlands of Duffus in a dispute about the marches of Coul and Skelbo. In 1627 Alexander Sutherland, then a boy about five years of age, was served heir to his father, and during his minority was under the care of his uncle James, who was appointed his guardian. He married Lady

Jean Mackenzie, daughter of the Earl of Seaforth, who died in 1648. He was the first Lord Duffus, having been created a peer by Charles II in 1651. When General Middleton landed at Little Ferry in February, 1654, he stored a large supply of arms and ammunition in Skelbo Castle. Alexander died on 31st August, 1674, and was succeeded by his son James, who became a member of the Privy Council in 1686. He had to take refuge in England for the slaying of the Laird of Kindeace, and his estates becoming burdened with debt, he sold them to his second son, James, who was an advocate. He married his cousin—the oldest daughter of Seaforth—in 1674, and died in 1705. Kenneth, third Lord Duffus, succeeded his father. He was a naval officer, and was in the West Indies when his father died. He took part in the rebellion of 1715 and was forfeited. After his surrender he was committed to the Tower of London, but he was liberated in 1717. Thereafter he entered the Russian naval service. He died about 1734. Skelbo Castle was occupied on March 20th, 1746, by the Jacobite troops under the command of the Earl of Cromartie, who made it his headquarters for a time. At his father's death, Eric Sutherland claimed the title, but his claim was rejected by the House of Lords. His wife, Lady Elizabeth Duffus, in 1747 had under her care, at Skelbo, Betty, daughter of the 16th Earl of Sutherland, whose wife died when he was at Bath. A letter has been preserved at Dunrobin in which Lady Duffus gives the Earl news regarding his motherless daughter. He died at





Skelbo in 1768, and was succeeded by his son James, who had just attained his majority. Pennant, who visited the neighbourhood in 1769, says that Skelbo Castle "passed through several hands until at last it came to Lord Duffus's, and now returns to the family of Sutherland. It was a great pile of building surrounded with a rampart. The present house is still habitable. The situation is most beautiful, and a fine house there would have a noble effect." The title was restored in his favour by Act of Parliament in 1826, and in the following year he died. As he had disposed of the lands and barony of Skelbo in 1787 to the Countess of Sutherland, the long connection of the Duffus family with Skelbo ceased with him.

The founder of that family was Nicolas Sutherland, to whom in 1360 his brother, William, Earl of Sutherland, granted the lands of Torboll. He married a daughter of Reginald de Cheyne and May, Lady Duffus, who brought to him her portion of the lordship of Duffus. He gave his son Henry a charter of Torboll in 1408, which was confirmed by Robert, sixth Earl of Sutherland. Alexander Sutherland was confirmed in the lands of Torboll by John, seventh Earl of Sutherland, on 12th July, 1444, and he died before 1487. His third son, Angus, succeeded him, and in 1472 his son Nicholas was given a charter of the lands of Torboll upon the resignation by his father of these lands to the Earl of Sutherland in Dornoch Cathedral. Nicholas died without issue, and was succeeded by his brother, Hugh Sutherland of Pronsy and Torboll, who was infeft in Torboll in 1492. He

died before 1525 without male issue, and his daughter Christina was infefted as heir; but the lands of Torboll were granted by the Earl of Sutherland to William Sutherland of Duffus as the next heir male. It was he who acquired Skelbo in 1529 from John Kynnard.

#### PRONCY CASTLE

The earliest history of Proncy Castle, like the origin of its name, is wrapped in obscurity. It formed part of the lands granted by Hugo Freskyn to Gilbert de Moravia, and afterwards gifted by him to his brother Richard. As only the foundations of the castle now remain, the date of its erection cannot be determined without excavation. Dr Douglas Simpson, Aberdeen, visited the site in the autumn of 1922, and he characterises it as "an interesting example of an early Norman *motte*." "At a subsequent period," he writes, "the mound has been crested by a small stone castle, the remains of which are now reduced to little more than grassy foundations. . . . The mound, which is doubtless a natural lump scarped to uniform slopes, varies from 12 to 15 feet in height above the ridge to the south, from which it has been isolated by a ditch of which distinct traces remain. The surface area of the mound is about 100 feet in diameter. Round the edge remains of a stone wall crop out at intervals, and within this a raised area, about 20 feet broad, extends all round the *enceinte*, with occasional traces of walling on the inner side. The entrance into the *motte* seems to be indicated by a gap about 18 feet wide in the rampart of the south



side, with a sunk path leading diagonally up the mound. About the centre of the *motte* are the overgrown foundations of a rectangular, tower-like construction, set with its long axis from north-east to south-west, and measuring apparently about 20 feet by 12. The walls may have been five feet thick. Several detached fragments of masonry, exhibiting massive grouted structure, lie to the south of the tower. Shells of the species *Cardium* have been freely used in the mortar, which is very tough."

No mention of Proncy occurs in any available records before 1525, when Adam Gordon, Earl of Sutherland, and Elizabeth, his spouse, granted to William Sutherland of Duffus the lands and lordship of Pronsie, in succession to the deceased Hugh Sutherland. By a charter, dated 31st October, 1562, John, Earl of Sutherland, granted to Alexander Sutherland of Duffus, along with the lands and barony of Skelbo, the lands and barony of Proncy, which included "Proncy Castletown, Tower and Fortalice thereof." In 1584 Proncy was wadsetted to John Chisholm of Achinthesaurer by William Sutherland of Duffus, and again in 1612 to Richard Sutherland of Proncynard, whose son James was served heir to his father on 10th August, 1644. James Sutherland was succeeded by his second son, Alexander, in October, 1688. His oldest son, James, married Margaret Sutherland in 1712, and the lands of Proncy were disposed to him by his father by a sasine dated 25th February, 1717. In June of that year James Sutherland, yr. of Pronsie, made a claim against the forfeited estate of Skelbo for payment of a sum of money he had loaned to Kenneth,

late Lord Duffus. Margaret Sutherland outlived her husband, and in 1722 she married Sir John Gordon of Embo. She sued David Sutherland of Proncy for payment of an annuity of 500 merks due to her under her marriage contract. James Sutherland was served heir to his father in 1727, and also in 1743 before the bailies of Edinburgh. In 1784 Alexander James Grant was served heir to his uncle, James Sutherland of Proncy; but he did not enjoy possession for more than a few years, as, in 1797, Murray Grant was served heir to his brother Alexander. In a document of 1808 there is mention made of a David Sutherland in Proncy.

#### EMBO HOUSE

The old house of Embo is said to have been destroyed by fire towards the close of the eighteenth century. The present building was erected by Mr Robert Hume Gordon when he contested Sutherland, and, according to Mr Sage, he “built this splendid mansion for the purpose of entertaining the electors.” He describes it in his *Memorabilia Domestica* as he first saw it on his way to Dornoch in 1801. “The front was of hewn ashlar, and consisted of three distinct houses, the largest and loftiest in the centre, joined to the other two by small narrow passages, each lighted by a window, and forming altogether a very imposing front. The centre house was four storeys high—first, a ground or rather sunk floor, then a first, second, and, lastly, attic storey. The ground or sunken floor contained the kitchen and cellars, and in

front of it was a wall surmounted by an iron railing, resembling exactly the fronts in Princes Street, Edinburgh. Outer stairs ascended to the principal entry door, and along the whole front of the building extended a pavement. The lesser houses, or wings, were, each of them, a storey less in height than the central building; and the attic storeys were lighted from the front wall, instead of from the roof, by windows about precisely half the size of the rest, which greatly added to the effect and beauty of the whole. Behind were other two wings of the same height with those in front, extending at right angles from the principal buildings. The interior of the mansion corresponded with its external appearance. The principal rooms were lofty and elegant, ornamented with rich cornices, and each having two large windows." The house is very much to-day what it was in Sage's time.

Embo was for centuries the home of the Gordons of that ilk, who were descended from James Gordon of Drummoy, whose fourth son, John, acquired the property towards the end of the sixteenth century. He was, at first, a loyal and outstanding supporter of the House of Sutherland; but in 1615 he espoused the cause of the Mackays of Strathnaver, and did his utmost to weaken the influence of Sir Robert Gordon in the county. He married Jane Gordon, daughter of the laird of Garty, and at his death, on November 27, 1628, he was succeeded by his oldest son, John, who became first baronet of Embo, retrieved the fortunes of his family, and purchased a good deal of

property. In 1621 began a fierce and protracted controversy between the lairds of Embo and Skelbo regarding the marches between Coul and Skelbo, which developed into a vendetta between the two families, and caused disorder and bloodshed. It was eventually settled after much difficulty, but the echoes of it lasted over a long period. In 1629, along with Sir Robert Gordon and others, he was ordered by the Privy Council "to apprehend any Jesuits in the county, and all persons going on pilgrimages to chapels and wells." He was created a baronet in 1631. In 1643 he made a complaint to the Privy Council regarding Lord Reay's oppressive treatment of him, in which he declares that "he tyrannises as if ther wer no king nor law to put order to his insolences." His wife was Margaret, daughter of the Hon. Robert Leslie of Findrassie, and their union is commemorated by a stone over an archway in Embo stead, bearing the inscription "J.G. 1627. M.L." At his death in 1649 he was succeeded by his second son, Robert, who found the estate in an impoverished condition. He represented the county in Parliament for several years, and married his cousin, Jean Leslie, daughter of the Laird of Findrassie. There is some diversity of opinion regarding the date of his death. He was succeeded by his oldest son, John, who was a student at Marischal College in 1672, where he won the archery medal. He was a captain in Lord Strathnaver's regiment in 1689, and represented the county in Parliament. His wife was Ann Bayn, only daughter of the Laird of Delny, who bore him three sons and four daughters. Their oldest son, Sir John,

was the fourth baronet, and was served heir to his grandfather on January 10th, 1721. He married in 1727 Margaret Sutherland, widow of James Sutherland of Pronsy. He contested the county of Sutherland in 1724, but was unsuccessful. He died on April 14th, 1760, leaving two sons, the elder of whom succeeded him, and was served heir special to his father in Embo, Hilton, and Achintreasurer on Feb. 14th, 1761. He died at Embo on January 24th, 1779. His family consisted of three sons and four daughters. His two daughters, Anne and Betty, were probably the old ladies to whom Sage refers in his reminiscences of Dornoch. "The elder sister," he says, "was always ailing, and seldom visible to the outdoor public. Miss Betty herself was too feeble to walk out, but she usually sat in her window in the afternoon, dressed after the fashion of 1699, in an ancient gown, with a shawl pinned over her shoulders and a high cap as head gear. Like all females, perhaps, in the single state and of very advanced age, she was very fond of society, and of that light and easy conversation otherwise termed gossip. When therefore she took her station at her upper window, a female audience usually congregated below it. These attendants gave her the news of the day; and she made remarks upon it, as full of charity and goodwill towards all as such remarks usually are. These two ladies were as ancient in their descent as they were aged in years. Daughters of the Laird of Embo, they could trace descent from the noble family of Huntly, through Adam, Lord of Aboyne. Their brother was the last laird in the direct line, and was the immediate



predecessor of Robert Hume Gordon of Embo.’” This brother was the second son of the fifth baronet, and succeeded his older brother, Sir James Gordon, who came into the baronetcy in 1779, and died at Zutphen in 1786. He was a bachelor, and his brother therefore was his heir. Sir William Gordon was an officer in the 19th Regiment of Infantry, and after service abroad he accepted the adjutancy of the West Norfolk Militia, and died at Colchester in 1804. He was succeeded by his fifth son, George, who was born at Cork in 1776, and became an officer in the Bengal Engineers. He died unmarried at Prince of Wales Island in 1804, ten months after his brother’s decease. His younger brother, Orford, was the next baronet, and he was born at Norwich. He became a captain in the Ross-shire Buffs in 1805, and died at Brighton in 1857. As Embo had been purchased by the 2nd Duke of Sutherland in 1835, its long connection with the Gordon family then came to an end. None of its members appear to have resided in the present house, which was occupied at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Captain Kenneth Mackay, a descendant of Lord Reay, whose father married Esther, heiress of Torboll, and had to sell that property. Captain Mackay was factor for Reay and Skibo, collector of taxes, and had the farms of Torboll, Embo, and Proncy together. He died on 29th May, 1833, in his 78th year.

#### CYDERHALL

The 13th century name of Cyderhall was Siward-hoch, and the name is derived from two Norse words.



signifying Sigurd's cairn or burial mound. According to tradition, it was the residence and burial place of Sigurd Eynstein, a Viking Jarl, who is said to have died there in the ninth century. His grave is believed to be on the summit of Cnocskardi. In the agreement of 1275 between Bishop Archibald and the Earl of Sutherland, the "six davachs of Cyderhall" are included in the lands allocated to the Bishop. In 1557 Bishop Robert Stewart granted in feufarm to the Earl of Sutherland certain church lands, including Cyderhall. Part of the stipend assigned to John Gray as Constable of Skibo was derived from the dues of Sythera and other lands in the barony of Skibo. John Matheson in Sydra witnessed a charter given at Skelbo in 1573, by which John Watson, rector of Canisbay, granted his manse and croft to Alex. Lovell of Pitgrudy. Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Gordons came into possession of Cyderhall. They were descended from Adam Gordon, Dean of Caithness, who was a son of the first Earl of Huntly. His son, John Gordon of Drummoy and Ballelone, married Margaret Mackreth, Sir Robert Gordon's foster-mother, and they had four sons, of whom Alexander Gordon of Sidera was one. Among the documents in the Dunrobin charter-room is a wadset given in 1597 to Alexander Gordon and Mary Keith, his spouse. He it was who, "disguised in a pedlar's apparell," gained access to Dunrobin, and informed the captive Earl of Sutherland of the plan his friends had made for his rescue. He died in 1630 at the age of 95, "which," as Sir Robert Gordon remarks, "is verie rare." He was twice married, and by his

second wife had a son, John Gordon, who predeceased him. Sir Robert notes the extraordinary fact that he lived to see the great-grandchildren of his second marriage. His son married Jane Summer, daughter of a burgess in Edinburgh, and their second son, Alexander, succeeded his grandfather. In 1648 his financial difficulties were such that he had to renounce the lands of Sidderay and others to the Earl of Sutherland. His family's connection with Cyderhall thus terminated. His sister Margaret married Charles Pape, portioner of Meklereny, who lost his life in the brawl in Dornoch churchyard in which his two brothers were wounded.

In 1651 the Earl of Sutherland disposed of the town and lands of Sidera to Patrick Dunbar in Caut-hill, who conveyed them to his son Patrick in 1665. He retained possession for a long period; but he does not seem to have prospered, as may be gathered from a claim made by Alexander Gray, sometime minister of Assynt, to the lands of Siderhall, etc., in security of a sum of £2243 2s 8d Scots due to him by Patrick Dunbar. Captain Mackay of Scourie took over the debt, and wanted to take possession of the property; but Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonston intervened, and Sidera was sold to William, Earl of Sutherland. He gave a wadset of Sidera in 1742 to Catharine, Lady Strathnaver, his mother. It continued to be the property of the Sutherland family until, about twenty-five years ago, it was purchased by Mr Carnegie, and thus again became associated with the lands that in olden days formed the barony of Skibo.



*Painting by A. Ryle.*

**DORNOCH**



## CHAPTER XII

## SIDELIGHTS FROM THE SESSION RECORDS

THE Session records are like windows which look out upon the dim and distant vista of the past, affording a glimpse of church and social life in the parish in those bygone days. Thus they have a peculiar value and interest which awaken the regret that they do not go further back than the second decade of the eighteenth century. They are the product of many minds and many hands, for there were frequent changes in the session clerkship, which was almost invariably held by the parish schoolmaster. He left his own impress upon the minutes he wrote, and their interest greatly depends upon the way in which he set down the deliberations and doings of the court. He was too often content with a bare record of the business transacted, though, at times, the narrative is lit up by graphic touches from the writer's pen. It fell to one session clerk to record the criticism passed by the Session upon the work of his predecessor, who had proved a failure. They declared that in his minutes "there is observable a curt style, frequent contractions & many omissions." The office was no sinecure, as frequent meetings of Session were necessary for the discharge of its manifold duties. There were intervals when meetings could not be held owing to various contingencies, such as

the absence of the minister at the General Assembly; pressure of work at the time of harvest, which prevented the attendance of the elders; the disturbed condition of the country, and the occupation of Dornoch by troops during the risings of the '15 and '45. In ordinary circumstances the Session met at least once a month, and it not only administered the affairs of the Church in the parish and cared for its poor; in addition, as a Court of Justice, it adjudicated upon every offence against law and order brought before it, so that its hands were always full. Nor can one read the record of its doings without being impressed by the conscientiousness and fidelity with which it discharged its functions. Offenders, whatever their rank and position in life, were arraigned, and had to satisfy discipline when found guilty. Fugitives from discipline were brought to book, if the Session's arm could possibly reach them. One man escaped by going to Holland and enlisting in the Dutch army; but his was an exceptional case. A soldier in Colonel Monro's company had the temerity to defy the Session, and to declare that "he wou'd neither obey Session or Presbytery. Wherefore the Session find him Contumacious; but as he leaves the place & probably the kingdom they delay further procedure against him." Another offender was probably a nomad, as the Session decided that "being a Stranger and ubiquiter, and not knowing the place of his residence they refer inquiring further about him till he appear in the Country."

Fines were imposed upon those who ignored the citations of the court in accordance with the following



resolution passed at a meeting held on 25th June, 1739: "The Session Bailie considering that several offenders tho' personally charged do not attend the first dyet, does therefore appoint each delinquent to pay to the Officer two pence for the second & four pence for the third charge, and so on as oft as they are contumacious." If they persisted in their contumacy, they were referred to the Presbytery for excommunication. One man had to crave the indulgence of the Session for his failure to obey their citation on the plea "that he could not Compear before the Session on a Weekday by reason of Messengers that were ready to Apprehend him w<sup>t</sup>. dilligence." The Session evidently sympathised with him in his difficult position, as they agreed that he should appear before them "after sermon" on Sunday.

As the records largely depict the seamy side of life in those far-off days, they do not present a complete picture of parish life at that time. They afford an illustration of the truth enshrined in those familiar lines—

"The evil that men do lives after them;  
The good is oft interred with their bones."

Many names live upon the pages of those old records because of the misdemeanours of those who bore them, who would otherwise have passed into oblivion. Some of them are an indication of the influx of southerners into Dornoch at that period in its history—such names as Leig, Paplay, Serge, Stephen, Cant, Lovell, Troup, Lithgow, Strode, Hood, etc. The

designation in some cases shows that occupations then existed that have now become obsolete in the burgh, *e.g.*, Wigmaker, Gunsmith, Cordiner, Bower, Piner, etc.

Cases of immorality occupy a large section of the records, and they cast a lurid light upon the low standard of morality that prevailed in those days. As, however, the strict supervision the Session exercised concerned even the domestic affairs of the parishioners, its records throw some interesting sidelights upon the manners, customs and social life of the parish during the period which they cover.

Trials for *Sabbath desecration* were frequent, so rigid an observance of that day did the Session demand. At times the offence was aggravated by special circumstances, and was then more severely punished. Many cases arose from excessive drinking in the alehouses, which were open on Sunday. The most trivial offence was not overlooked. "It being delated that several Children in the Town of Dornoch & elsewhere thro' the parish did prophane the Lord's day, the Session does hereby enact that the parents of such Children be taken notice of and proceeded against according to the Laudable Laws of the Nation and public Intimation hereof be made next Lord's day."

"Delated that it was a common practice to sell snuff upon the Lord's day in this town and to keep open doors to that effect even in time of Divine worship, which the Session considering appoint all the snuff sellers in the place to be cited to next diet of

session, viz. Christian Nindauvie, Elizabeth Ninhemish, Janet Ninghilbert, William Garve, Alex. Buy, Geo. Macleod, and Andrew M'Hutcheon's wife." They all appeared at next meeting and "were rebuked for such scandalous practice and exhorted to beware of the like for the future which they all promised to do in the Lord's strength."

"The Session being informed that both in time of divine worship and after several of the inhabitants throwing aside all fear of God do repair in crowds to the shore for diversion and gathering Dilce appoint the Kirk Officer, as the Baillie did the Town Officers, to notice such persons and immediately to summon those whom they can apprehend to the next diet of the Session, and that for their encouragement the Fine shall be bestowed on themselves for their diligence."

"John H—— in Dornoch Compearing told he was necessitate to stay from Sermon that afternoon to wait of a Child of his that had two fits of the falling sickness that day and told there was none in his house in the time of Divine worship but Himself and wife. He acknowledged that W—— T—— & his wife & Mr P—— were in his house between Sermons and drank a quart Ale and that at the ringing of the third bell they went out of his house and sat in his yeard and stayed there till sermon was done and afterwards returned to said John's house but made no stay." At a later meeting the others concerned "gave as a reason they were not in the Church at the Afternoon Service the Sd. Lord's day that none of them under-

stood Irish, and that they thought the Irish began first. But when they were coming to the Kirk door they were told that the English sermon was ended and thereupon they returned. The Session considering that they were never before found guilty of the like rebuked them severely and exhorted them to a more Circumspect walk in time Coming."

Three men and one woman "all in Toberintail were guilty of drinking to excess and beating one another upon the Lord's day and they being cited to this diet compeared and could not deny but they were beating one another which was the effect of them drinking to such a pitch. They are rebuked & apted. to stand before the Congregation next Lord's day."

"Delated that D—— M—— alias Tuanach was beastly drunk upon the last Sabbath day in a house at Skelbo." He "acknowledged he was drunk sd. day," and a companion "confessed he forced Barm & Settlings upon him till he could neither move speak or stand." They were made "to stand before the congregation," and one of them "told in face of the congregation that it was his wife's fault that he drank to such a pitch," the truth of which his wife afterwards acknowledged. She, too, had to satisfy discipline.

A woman from Achbannarich was charged with drinking, along with her married daughter and her son-in-law, in an alehouse at Proncynain, and with "stealing from the said house two sheaves of barley, some lint, and a table napkin." This happened after divine service on Sunday, which they had attended.

One witness "deponed he saw her take up some tow & put it in her bosom." She was found guilty of "breach of Sabbath," and had to "stand two Sundays."

A Balvraid shoemaker was charged with "Sabbath profanation by going on Sabbath day in quest of ane ox taken of the grass, which is agravated by his pointing of a sick woman at the point of death of her very bed cloths upon suspicion of the ox being taken away by her husband." The offence was admitted, and the shoemaker had to satisfy discipline.

A man who pleaded guilty to "breach of the Sabbath," and who "acknowledged his being drunk to such a pitch he did not know what he was doing," was ordered "to stand before the congregation of Dornoch, ay and while they shall see satisfying evidence of his repentance."

The landlord of an alehouse, his wife, and a number of others were charged with "excessive drinking on the Lords day," and on account of the "atrociousness of their guilt & their Prevarication of Disingenuity," they were fined severely by the Session Bailie, who ordered them "to pay their fines instantly or go to Prison therein to remain on their own proper Charges till Payment bees made."

Two Achley women were charged with Sabbath profanation, and one of them acknowledged that on the Sabbath day the other woman "having a Cow upon her Grass, was desired to take the Cow away, upon which she scolded and scratched deponent to the effusion of her blood." The accused woman "con-

fessed that she had bit wt. her teeth " her neighbour, and she had to satisfy discipline.

A woman was found guilty of " horrid profanation of the Lord's day by going out shearing "; another was charged with " cutting kail on the said day and that also in time of Divine worship, which is an aggravation of her guilt "; the wife of a Dornoch weaver was cited before the Session for the crime of " carrying in water upon the Lord's day in two great water stoups." A Dornoch shoemaker was charged with " pulling dills after divine worship," and having " confessed his horrid sin," he was rebuked, and ordered to " make public repentance." Another man was charged with " harrying nests on the Sabbath "; another with " baking bread "; another with " chiding his neighbours "; while two Balvraid men, convicted of " fighting on Sunday, were fined and made to stand two days before the congregation." A man designated as " Piner in this town " was charged with " keeping ane open Ile House in time of divine worship." Even a Kirk officer owned to having allowed drinking in his house on Sunday; but as it was his first offence, he was dismissed with " a sessional rebuke."

Of *unseemly behaviour in church* only two cases are recorded. One was that of a young man from Embo, who was " guilty of unseemly behaviour in the church by laughing and jeering in time of public service." He acknowledged his offence, " alledging that he was tempted thereto by a Skibo lad." They were both rebuked before the congregation. The



other offender was a "Chirurgion in Dornoch," who appeared before the Session and "acknowledged with great weight on his spirit his being hurried by Temptation to give offence to the congregation by removing an unruly child out of a seat which he looked upon as his Pupil's property, and the Boy making a noise when put out of the seat by him occasioned the offence to the congregation for which he professed his grief and sorrow." He was rebuked before the congregation, and fined one guinea.

*Ignorance of doctrine and neglect of ordinances* were also grounds of complaint to the Kirk Session. One man was described as "Grossly ignorant inso-much that when examined last by the Modr. he denied some essential points of his faith. The Session appoint their Catechist to continue with him, ay and while he can repeat & give distinct account of the Creed, Ten Commandments, and Lord's prayer." A Dornoch wright, whose six weeks' old child had died without having been baptised, was brought before the Session, and on the ground that "the said man seems to be a contemner of the ordinance of Baptism by such wilful neglect," he was sharply rebuked, and ordered to stand before the congregation.

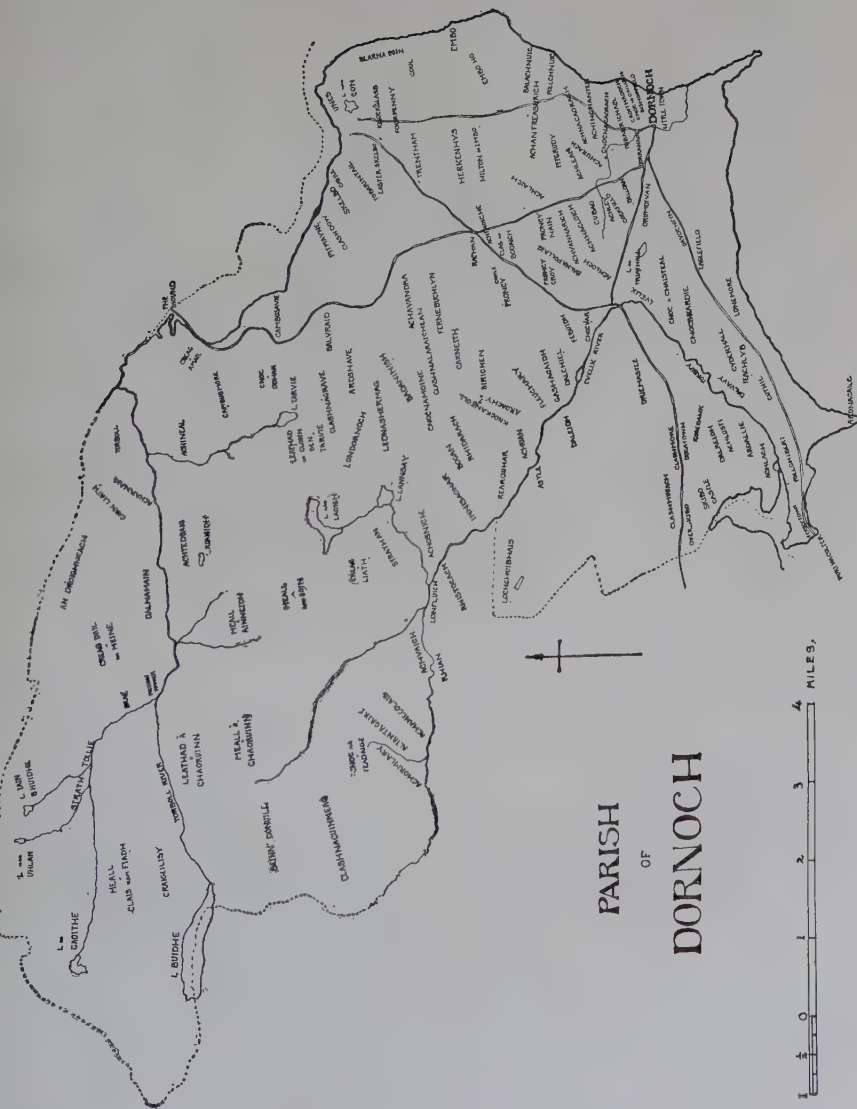
The Session had often to deal with *neighbours' quarrels* and abuse of each other. One of the earliest minutes records the case of a woman who was charged with uttering "horrid oaths and imprecations" against her neighbour and his wife. A witness deponed that he had heard the accused "Swear & Imprecate the vilest Curses to fall upon the said

——'s wife, & vow that tho she had twenty Children she should never have milk''; also that "she would cause his house Decay like shelling seeds before the wind." Her case was referred to the civil magistrate.

A Dornoch woman and her mother were charged with "horrid cursings and imprecations and abusing" the wife of "the Custom house officer in this town." When cited by the kirk officer, the offender declared that "she would never answer the Session while there was a tooth in his head." Her neighbours bore witness to the grossly abusive language she used. Her father was cited as a witness, and he "deponed that he had heard such horrid imprecations and cursing twixt the officer's wife and his as would make the stones sweat." Her case was referred to the Presbytery, and she was ordered by that court "to appear before the congregation until the Session was satisfied as to her repentance." The Bailie fined her £6 Scots, and ordered her to prison until she could find bail.

A woman from Achvandra was "delated to have a very bad tongue and to make a daily practice of cursing and railing at her neighbours, which all about her complain of." She could not deny the charge, "wherefore the Session appoint her to stand before the congregation and be rebuked and exhort her to a more circumspect walk for the future *sub pœna*."

A woman was charged with calling a mother and her daughter "witches and went frequently in the



MAP OF THE PARISH OF DORNOCH



bire and stead of swine." She was cited, but did not appear, and her case was afterwards postponed at the suggestion of the Presbytery, because "she is at present nursing a Gentleman's Child." A man in Drumdivan defamed a woman by calling her "the Devil's limmar," while a Dornoch man accused his neighbour's wife of being a "witch & that she had Devilrie." A Davochfin woman complained that her neighbour called her a witch, and said that "she had the picture of the devil between her eyes." An Embo man confessed that "when his neighbour's wife put her cow in his Bear to feed on the Sabbath day he was provoked to tell her that if it were another day he would make her cow milk blood."

Several persons from the Barony of Skibo were accused of *drunkenness*; but, after due inquiry, the Session found that "they did by no means drink to excess, only took a drink transiently to refresh themselves." They were accordingly absolved.

The strong arm of the Session invaded even the sanctity of the home, and cases of *domestic discord* and strife were far from uncommon. A few of them may be quoted. A husband and wife, who had separated, were cited to appear before the Session. The woman excused her desertion of her husband by asserting that "he did not behave as a husband should towards her, because he had beat her for a frivolous matter, he did put her out of doors, he took the keys from her." The husband retorted "that he had taken away the keys because of her mismanagement, and denied *simpliciter* beating of her." The Session,

after serious consideration, “ upon the whole looked upon the said Margaret as an impudent woman that deserved to be corrected severely, They being in perfect knowledge that the said John is a well natured poor man, & if he was provoked to strike her it was entirely owing to herself, and Therefore resolved to Rebuke them both *Coram*, and Charge them to Cohabite with certification, unless it was found they did so that they would undergoe the highest Censure they could inflict, and both parties being called this was intimated to them who accordingly promised obedience & were dismissed.”

A tenant in Skibo was charged with having ill-treated his wife. It was asserted that he “ did about the beginning of the Month of May in a most barbarous manner beat & bruise & turn out of the house his own wife so that she was forced to come to the house of Samuel Baxter Elder & loge with him a Night being afraid of her life. That when said Samuel convoyed her home next morning her husband offered to strick her with a Mattock or Muckhow, as was judicially declared by said Samuel.” The offender ignored the citations of the Session, and having been threatened with excommunication for his contumacy, he finally agreed to satisfy discipline.

The wife of a Cambusavie man, whose nickname was Shalgar (Hunter), “ being interrogate what was the cause of her not living with her husband, she gave only for answer that she thought herself ill used as to the Necessaries of life.” She and her husband had to appear before the Session, “ & both of them being



dealt with promised to live together in peace & harmony with one another as became Married persons. Wherefore the Session dismiss them wt. a Reprimand & Exhortation to this purpose."

A Skelbo man was charged with "abusing and maltreating his wife, and both parties being present & being interrogate as to the above the said Margaret asserted that it was fact that she had been used in a very unchristian manner by her said husband, being continually loaded with reproaches, wrongously charged with mismanagements, and so pinched as to the necessaries of life that she was obliged to separate from him." The husband "alledged for his own defence that his wife was much to blame in several respects, But that it was mostly owing to his Mother who assumed that part in his house which belonged to his wife, that he was heartily sorry for any mistakes that had hapned 'twixt them, to prevent which in time comeing he promised to remove his Mother to another house, and allow his wife to enjoy all the freedom that became her in her own house. Upon the whole, the Session haveing rebuked said Angus for the treatment he had given his Wife, dismissed him with this certification that if he shou'd give any further cause of complaint, he might expect more severe usage." Six months later they had to appear again before the Session, owing to a report that they were still at variance with each other. The husband "was interrogate whether or not he had obeyed the former Sentence of this Session, & what was the cause of his Wife's separation from him. To which he answered

that he had actually, in obedience to the Session & to remove all Cause of Complaint from his Spouse, built a house for his Mother at a Distance from his own where she has lived ever since, that his Wife not only squandered away his Effects as he was ready to prove in severall instances if judged necessary, But likewise treated him wt. very Opprobrious Language particularly told him one night when alone that the Divel's picture was in his face, & that she could never love him. . . . And ffurther that the main cause of their Separation was owing to her Mother who in the throng of Bear harvest sent Kathrine Ross express for his Wife & brought her along, since which time his Wife never returned to him." Further evidence of her "unchristian conduct towards her husband" convinced the Session that "his behaviour towards her" was justified.

The records contain one charge of *bigamy*. A Dornoch woman had to appear before the Session in September, 1750, to answer a charge of "having two husbands in life." They were both soldiers; one was a recruiting sergeant, while the other was a soldier in Ireland. She was sharply rebuked, and her case was referred to the Presbytery.

In the two cases that follow, "standing in the Jougs" was the penalty prescribed. A woman of notorious character and evil life, named Isabell Nicolliandrew, had to answer for her scandalous conduct, and "the Session Considering her former bad life doe appoint that She stand before the Congregation in Sack Cloath, & the Session Baillie ordained her

to stand in the Joggs from the Ringing of the first Bell till the Ringing of the last, & considering that she has no fixt place of Abode ordered to imprison her till she should find Surety for her Obtemperating the forsaid Sentence."

A man named Duncan Mackay, convicted of a grave offence, was ordered, "for a terror to others, to stand at the Kirk Door in Jogs from the second to the third bell on Sabbath next," and he was also fined £12 Scots.

An illustration of the close co-operation between the civil and ecclesiastical courts is provided by a case in which "Hugh McDonald, Town Clerk of Dornoch, presented a complaint entered before the Baillie Court" by a widow against three female "Residenters in Dornoch for Receipt of Goods Stollen from the said Complainer, and also an Extract of the Magistrates' Sentence against the said Defendants referring them to the Kirk Session for Ecclesiastical Censure, Which Complaint and Reference The Session having considered did immediately cause Cite the said Offenders to compear before them Instantly." Three of them "being confined by Sickness so that they cannot Compear the Session delays further proceedings with respect to them till they be in Condition to attend." The other "having compeared and confessed the Crime libelled against her the Session Ordains that she shall be publickly Rebuked from the Pulpit next Lord's Day to deter others from the like Practices in Time coming."

One individual, having been asked if he was guilty of the offence with which he was charged, “ answered that he would need some time to converse with his own conscience in order to be in readiness to acquit or condemn himself in the sight of God and his people & give full satisfaction to the Session.”

A Pronsy woman acknowledged “ that she had not been at Church for seven or eight Months past but alleages for Excuse that in the Winter Time she was detained by the cold, not being able to afford the necessary defences against it, and since the Season became more clement the Sickness of her Children confined her close at home. The Session having heard her Excuses dismiss her with suitable Exhortation.”

The *Lykewake* was the watch held over a dead body, and its origin dates from Roman Catholic times. The custom was observed, however, in this country for centuries after the Reformation. The General Assembly of 1701 revived the Act of 1645 anent lykewakes, and appointed the Act to be read in churches. But the practice had obtained such a strong hold upon the people that no attempt was made by Kirk-Sessions to prohibit lykewakes, as the Act of Assembly directed. They had, however, become occasions for unseemly and disorderly conduct, and upon such abuses Sessions kept a watchful eye. A few cases of this character are recorded in the records of this parish. Several men and one woman from the near neighbourhood of Dornoch were charged in 1723 with “ dancing at lykewakes.” In the following year a

man from Balvraid had to satisfy discipline "for his Unchristian Behaviour in dancing in Lykewakes," and promised "thro' the Lord's Strength never to be guilty of the Like again." In 1735 three Skelbo women of the name of Sutherland were found "guilty of scandalous behaviour by Dancing, Singing & Playing at a Lykewake"; at a subsequent meeting of Session they denied the charge. The Session resolved to take the evidence of witnesses, but no further reference to the case occurs in the records.

*Guising* on Hogmanay was common in olden days, and the practice has not yet quite died out. It was at one time associated in Dornoch with the repetition of certain rhymes to which the Session objected. In 1734 three Embo men were charged with "going about to severall houses on the Night before New Year's Day last & Repeating ane odious & anti-christian Rhime att every Door in order to gett a Newyear's gift." They had "to stand before the congregation, & the Baillie fined each of them to pay One pound Scotts of fine" Two men from Cambusavie were, at a subsequent meeting, charged with "Blasphemous Rhiming on New Year's Eve." What these rhymes were it is now impossible to ascertain.

An official upon whose loyalty and diligence the Session greatly depended was the Beadle or Church Officer. The Cathedral, possibly because of its size or character, had two. In 1721 Angus Taylor was appointed one of the kirk officers instead of Donald Macleod, who is "superannuated," on condition that during Macleod's lifetime Taylor should pay him

“half of the sett salarie and emoluments of the said station.” The old beadle did not long survive his retirement, as, at a meeting in March, 1722, the Session agreed that “four merks Scots be given to buy a coffin to Donald Macleod, late kirk officer.” The other officer must also have been advanced in years, as, at a meeting held on June 15th, 1724,” “the Session considering that Alex. Monro, Kirk Officer, is superannuated in so much that he cannot discharge his office they appoint John Ross, Catechist, in his room, and have condescended upon a small portion of Charity to be given said Alexander during his life-time.” Angus Taylor was still on duty in 1744; but John Ross died before Martinmas, 1737, and was buried at the Session’s expense. An item in the Treasurer’s accounts for that year shows that £6 9s Scots was expended upon “Coffin, Linnen, Aquavita, etc., for the Interrment of John Ross, Kirk Officer.”

These accounts contain many interesting items, which prove that, though the Session was a Court of Justice, it tempered justice with mercy. Among these items are:—£2 13s 4d for “a coffin to ane object that dyed in Thomas McKiamis’ house; To a Blind 2 Sh.; To a Cripple in Cyderhall . . . £1 4s; To Dead Linnen for a poor object . . . £1 6s 8d; To ane Object from Dingwall whose house was burnt . . . 6 sh.; To ane Object taken by the Turks . . . 6 sh.; To a poor Man who had his tongue cut out by the Turks . . . 12 shillings; To ye Poor at ye Kirk Door on Munday 5 sh.” Other items show a periodical



expenditure upon Oil, Soap, and Iron for the Bell; the hire of Communion Cups from Golspie and “ the carriage of them ”; “ 2 Sand Glasses and a Brander to ditto; Badges for the Poor; Hanging the Bell and Mending a Door.” A miller at Evelix, described as “ ane honest, industrious and serious man,” having had twins born to him “ and little to support them,” received financial assistance from the Session. “ Alex. Robson a poor object in this town represented his miserable condition by being obliged to beg his daily bread for himself and his wife, who now by Six or Seven Years close confinement to her bed is both Deaf and Dumb and Senseless the Session considering this pitiful case, ordered the Thesaurer to give him twelve pence directly,” and the Moderator was asked to commend the poor man’s “ clamant case ” to the congregation next Lord’s Day.

## CHAPTER XIII

## WITCHCRAFT IN DORNOCH

WITCHCRAFT was extensively practised in the North of Scotland in the 17th century. In a letter written by John, 12th Earl of Sutherland, to his brother, Sir Robert Gordon, in February, 1615, he says:—"I haue presentlie resaued ane letter from Mr Jhone Gray, out of Sutherland, making mentione of the abuses of witchcraft in that contrey, quhilk they haue tryed laitlie in Dornoch. Theirfoir I beseik you, brother, sie if ye can get ane commissione from his Maiestie to put ane number of witches to ane assise. Ather this iniquitie must be tane ordour with, or ellis honest peopill can not liue in that contrey." Sir Robert Gordon had considerable influence at Court, and King James VI, who regarded witchcraft as a heinous crime, would readily grant the authority the Earl desired. We can imagine, therefore, that the iron hand of the law was laid heavily upon those who practised the "black art" in the wilds of Sutherland. Minor forms of it were not uncommon even among ordinary people in these northern parts, as the Kirk-Session records show. There we find parties charged with such offences as "casting hearts in lead," "taking away the substance of the milk," "swearing on the Bible and on iron," "divining by sieve, shears and comb."

Two men from Asdale were charged before the Kirk Session in 1720 with “practising Charms and that lately they did cast the pattern of a Child’s heart in lead, and they gave that heart of lead made after the form of a Childs to D—— M—— in Asdale that he might give water of it to some tender Children he had.” One man owned his guilt, and when asked “if he had used any words at the Casting of it, Confessed that he invoked the Name of the Ever Blessed trinity Father Son & Holy Ghost.” The case was referred to the Synod, whose finding was “That since there are many that are guilty of Charming rather out of Ignorance than any Compact with the Devil the Minister should preach upon the heinousness of that Sin of Charming and rebuke the said Donald McK. for Casting such hearts and the said Donald McK. for his making use of the Water taken in such a manner of the said heart.” Another Asdale man was cited to the Session because he had said that his neighbour’s wife “took away the substance of his milk.” This he denied, and averred that he had only said “that he found her one day take an Apron full of Dung out of his byre.” An Embo milkwife and her neighbour were severely censured by the Session for “in a senseless way accusing one another of charms.” Three men from Pulrossie were convicted by the Session of Creich in 1717 of having “divined by Sieve Sheer & Comb in order to find out something that was Stolen.” Their case was referred to the Presbytery, and that court, “taking a view of the whole affair in its nature, circumstances and consequences . . . as

also considering how frequent this abominable practice of Divination has been and is in this country, summarily excommunicated the diviners. Divination by sieve and shears was very common, and the process has been thus described :—"The points of the shears were stuck into the rim of the sieve about an inch apart, the whole being then balanced on two fingers by the performer, who kept repeating an incantation till the sieve oscillated to one side or the other, the significance of a turn in either direction being previously arranged."

While the average Highlander of those olden days may not have been above practising divination in some mild form, when it served his purpose, there were a few old women in most districts of the North who were reputed to be in league with the devil and to possess exceptional powers, which they exercised to the detriment of their neighbours, who feared and hated them. Many of them were just poor, old, lonely, decrepit creatures whom poverty, isolation, and bodily ailments had rendered peevish, secretive, and peculiar in their manners and habits. Others were crafty old hags, who played upon the fears and superstitious notions of their credulous neighbours and made profit out of them. Their supposed partnership and secret dealings with the Evil One, to whom it was believed they had sold themselves, constituted a crime for which death could be the only penalty that accorded with the Divine injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." In the reigns of Henry VIII, Elizabeth, and James VI statutes were passed against

witchcraft, and many executions of witches followed. Even ladies of noble birth and good position were suspected of the crime. A certain Lady Fowlis was indicted by the King's Advocate for the practice of witchcraft, but was acquitted by a local jury. The daughter of an eminent judge was burned at the stake as a witch in the last decade of the sixteenth century. She was found guilty of compassing the death of her own godfather and others, and sentenced to be "burnt in assis, quick to the death."

The last justiciary trial for the crime of witchcraft in Scotland was that of Elspeth Rule in 1708. She was convicted and banished. A worse fate was that of Janet Horne, an old woman from the parish of Loth in Sutherland, who, nearly twenty years later, was charged with witchcraft and brought to Dornoch for trial. Captain David Ross of Little Dean was Sheriff-Depute at the time, and may possibly have been the official who, some years previously, had been severely reprimanded by Robert Dundas of Arniston, King's Advocate, for failing to send him the precognitions of certain witches who had undergone examination. He was at the same time strictly enjoined to refrain from judging such cases himself, and reminded that they were "above the jurisdiction of an inferior court." The injunction of the King's Advocate can have had little or no effect if the Sheriff-Depute to whom it was addressed was the same who presided at the trial of Janet Horne. That Sir Walter Scott apparently thought they were identical may be gathered from the reference he makes to this case in

his *Tales of a Grandfather*, where he says :—"The last execution for witchcraft took place in the remote province of Sutherland in 1722 under the direction of an ignorant provincial judge who was censured by his superiors for the proceeding." This censuring of her judge came too late to save Janet Horne from her cruel fate.

According to local tradition she had been a lady's maid in her younger days, and had visited foreign parts with her mistress. After her marriage she had taken up her abode at Kintradwell, and had a daughter, one of whose hands was deformed. In her old age she seems to have, somehow, become an object of suspicion to her neighbours, who became convinced that she was a witch and had dealings with the Evil One. She was charged, among other crimes, with having transformed her daughter into a pony, which she rode to the witches' rendezvous and on the errands of her Satanic master. The old woman and her daughter were arrested and confined in the Tolbooth of Dornoch, an old and somewhat ruinous building, which had once been the Chapter-House of the Cathedral. The younger woman managed to escape; whether before or after the trial is not clear. But her deformed hand, suggestive to the prejudiced minds of her accusers of a horse's hoof, was held to be proof positive that her mother, after some midnight ride, had failed to restore her daughter completely to human form. This in itself was sufficient to secure the old woman's condemnation, though the deformity may well have been due to some such



natural cause as that suggested by Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, in a letter she wrote to her friend, Mr Sharpe, in 1808. After a passing reference to the superstitions prevalent in Sutherland, she goes on to say :—" You know that the last witch burnt in Scotland suffered in Dornoch, to our everlasting shame, in 1722. Her daughter, a fishwife in a village about eight miles from here, happened to have burned her hands when a child, which contracted her fingers, and the common people ascribed her misfortune to her mother's witchcraft, and imagined that this creature could turn herself into a pony, and that being shod by the devil occasioned this blemish. Lord Stafford to-day, in walking near their village, met a man (a beggar) with his hands in that form, the son of this fishwife and grandson of the witch, and the descendants of that family are still feared in the neighbourhood from that old *liaison*."

Any doubt as to Janet's guilt that may have lurked in the minds of her accusers was removed by a test to which she was subjected. She was asked to repeat the Lord's Prayer in Gaelic, and persisted in saying, " Ar n-Athair a *bha* air neamh"—i.e., " Our Father who *wert* in heaven"—instead of " Ar n-Athair a *ta* air neamh"—" Our Father who *art* in heaven." It was but one little word that was wrong; but it sealed Janet's fate, for it was regarded as convincing proof that she was addressing the Devil, who had been expelled from heaven for his rebellion against the Most High. Her guilt having thus been established, sentence of death was pronounced.

According to local tradition she was subjected to shameful indignity and cruelty before she suffered the extreme penalty imposed by law. She is said to have been stripped, tarred and feathered, and in this pitiable condition carted about the town as a terror to evil-doers. The day was chilly, and the poor wretch was so cold by the time she arrived at the spot chosen for her execution that she is said to have warmed her hands at the fire prepared for her burning, exclaiming as she did so, "Eh, what a bonnie blaze!" The poor woman must have been so demented that she had no idea of the awful fate that was in store for her. Sir Walter Scott's account of the tragic incident accords with the local tradition on which it was probably based. He thus describes it:—"The victim was an old woman in her last dotage, so silly that she was delighted to warm her wrinkled hands at the fire which was to consume her; and who, while they were preparing for her execution, repeatedly said that so good a blaze and so many neighbours gathered round it made the most cheerful sight she had seen for many years!"

A rough stone now standing in the garden of a small thatched cottage adjoining the links marks the spot where Janet Horne met her cruel fate. It simply bears the date 1722. That is the commonly accepted date for the burning; that it is the correct one is open to doubt. Captain Burt, in his *Letters from the North of Scotland*, gives a later date, for he says:—"In the beginning of the year 1727 two poor Highland women (mother and daughter) in the shire of Sutherland were

accused of witchcraft, tried and condemned to be burnt. The proceeding was in a court held by the Deputy-Sheriff. The young one made her escape out of prison, but the old woman suffered that cruel death in a pitch barrel in June following at Dornoch, the head burgh of that county.” His account is so specific, and was written so soon after the event, that his date is probably the correct one. And confirmation of it is furnished by a letter written by an Alness correspondent in 1727 to the Rev. Robert Wodrow, minister of Eastwood, in which the following passage occurs :—“ Since I saw you in Edinburgh in May last, there has been great noise of witchcraft in the parish of Loth, in Sutherland, by which the minister is said to have suffered. He is not yet recovered; however, the thing has been examined into, and the women were, I know, before the presbytery.” The Church records extant shed no light upon the case here mentioned; but in all probability it was that of Janet Horne, who would thus appear to have added to her other misdemeanours by exercising her powers to the injury of her minister’s health! Whatever her crimes may have been, she paid the full penalty for them, and now occupies a niche in the Temple of Fame as the last of the many witches who, in the dark and troublous days of a bygone age, were “ wirreit at the stake and brint in assis” in Scotland.

*CHAPTER XIV*

## OLD WRITERS ON DORNOCH

THEY are seven in number; with one exception they were clergymen; all but two wrote of Dornoch as it was in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Four of them were merely visitors, and as Dornoch was but one of many places they passed in the course of their travels, their notices of it are brief, but none the less interesting. The other three were residents, one of them having spent part of his schooldays in Dornoch, while the other two were ministers of the parish, and wrote of it from intimate personal knowledge. Their notes are here given in chronological order.

The earliest of those four visitors to Dornoch was RICHARD POCOCKE, who was Bishop of Ossory when he visited Dornoch in 1760. He became Bishop of Meath in 1765, and died soon after his translation to that see. He describes Dornoch as “pleasantly situated on the head of land not far from the river of that name called the Kyle of Dornoch. There is very little trade in this town, and no manufacture but the spinning of yarn.” Regarding the Cathedral he writes:—“The church here is the body of the old Cathedral, which belonged to the Bishop of Cathness. It seems to be pretty near a Greek Cross, though in the Eastern part, now uncovered, there are four arches on each side supported by round pillars, with

a kind of a Gothic Doric capital. In the body of the nave are only three plain Gothic windows on each side, but what is most remarkable is a round tower within jynning to the South-West angle of the middle part. It is built for a staircase, and is about ten feet in diameter with geometrical stairs." The bishop, misled by his assumption that the ruinous part of the Cathedral was the chancel, mistook the east for the west, so that his points of the compass must be reversed. It is interesting to have his testimony that the present circular tower enclosing the stone stair to the tower was in existence at the time of his visit. He goes on to note the fact that "this is a royal burgh of which they made me a burgess." The Town Council minutes contain no reference to the bestowal of the honour he claimed, and, as there is no burgess roll for the burgh, his statement cannot be verified, but must be accepted as true. The old manses of the cathedral clergy were brought to his notice, and he writes:—"They also show the dean's house, and it is probable that several other houses standing near the church did belong to members of the chapter." His reference to "the bishop's house" is quoted in the chapter on "Old Houses and Families."

BISHOP FORBES, who was elected to the diocese of Ross and Caithness on October 14, 1761, paid a visit to his diocese in the following year, and his description of his tour contains the following reference to his visit to Dornoch:—"We left Polrossie at 20 minutes after nine, and having a pleasant road I was at Dornoch, the only town in Sutherland, 20 minutes

after 10 o'clock leaving the leisurely, asthmatic Mr Stewart to jog on as he pleased, and had visited the Cathedral before he reached me; for Dornoch was one of the seats of the Bishop of Cathness, as the shire of Sutherland was part of his Diocese. This Cathedral has been a stately building in the old Gothic Taste, and in the Form of a Cross, the West End of which is ruinous, only the Gable-End and the two side-walls, with the 5 South Pillars including the two in strong Basso Relievo in the two Gable-ends, are still standing. I went up to the Top of the Steeple, where there is only one Bell and that very good; but the public Clock (apage! apage!) is going to Ruin. I then visited the Bishop's Palace, which has been a stately and strong Edifice, vaulted below, and of five high stories, including the vaulted one; but the Stair, which is a very easy one, is six stories high. The walls of only a part of it are standing. A Blacksmith has his forge in one of the vaults, and was working at it when I was there.

“ ‘Lux mea, tende manus, contra tibi tendo catenas,  
Has nisi qui vinxit solvere nemo potest.’ ”

“ This little Town, a Royal Burgh, is a mile from the Frith, so that its situation is according to the old man's wish, viz. :—

“ ‘The Ocean at Distance, whereon I may look.’ ”

The Bishop spent only four hours in Dornoch, and then resumed his journey northward.

The next visitor was the layman of the quartette. He was THOMAS PENNANT, an English naturalist and



antiquary, who published in 1771 an account of a tour he had taken in Scotland in 1769. The passage relating to his visit to Dornoch describes it as "a small town half in ruins; once the residence of the Bishops of Cathness, and, like Durham, the seat of Ecclesiastics; many of the houses still are called after the titles of those that inhabited them; the Bishop lodged in the castle; the Dean's house is at present the inn. The cathedral was in form of a cross; built by Gilbert Moray, who died Bishop of Cathness in 1245, it is now a ruin, except part which is the present church. On the doors and window-shutters were painted (as is common in many parts of North Britain) white tadpole-like figures on a black ground, designed to express the tears of the country for the loss of any person of distinction. These were occasioned by the affecting end of that amiable pair, the young Earl and Countess of Sutherland, who were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided, for their happiness was interrupted by a very short separation."

"Ride on a plain not far from the sea; pass by a small cross, called the Thane's, erected in memory of the Battle of Embo in 1259, between William, Earl of Sutherland, and the Danes, who were overthrown, and their General slain, at this place; and not far from thence the spot where an unhappy creature had been burnt, if I mistake not, in June 1727, for the imaginary crime of witchcraft."

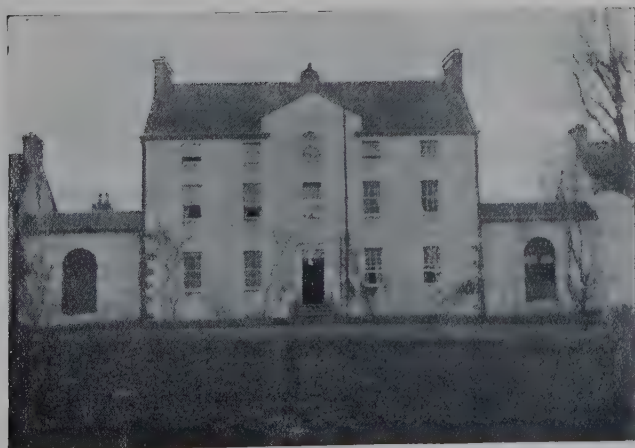
He describes the Cathedral as "when entire, a neat compact building," and he goes on to say that

“it was burnt in troublesome times and never fully repaired. The Bishop had his summer residence at Skibo; but in winter he lived in his castle at Dornoch, the ruins of which are to be seen. There was a stately fabrick of a church built in that town in the 11th century by St. Bar, Bishop of Cathness; but Bp. Murray thought it too small: it stood where the council house now stands.” Of Sir Richard Moray he writes that “his body lies in a stone coffin in the East isle of the cathedral above ground, near the font.” The Earl’s Cross, he says, “has the Earl of Sutherland’s arms on the North side, still very visible, and the Bishop of Cathness’s arms on the South side, but the heat of the sun has quite destroyed the sculpture.”

The Rev. CHARLES CORDINER, Minister of St. Andrew’s Chapel, Banff, at the suggestion of Mr Pennant, undertook a tour in the north of Scotland in 1776. He had a talent for drawing, and Pennant had asked him to sketch certain objects of interest he had noted during his tour. We are indebted to Cordiner for his sketch of the ruined nave of Dornoch Cathedral, without which it would be difficult to conceive its character and formation. He gave an account of his tour in his *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland*, which was published in 1780. His drawing of the Cathedral nave was reproduced in *Henderson’s Agriculture of Scotland*. His reference to Dornoch is somewhat devoid of historical interest. He says that “St. Bar, bishop of Caithness, erected a place of worship at Dornoch in the eleventh century;



THE EARL'S CROSS.



EMBO HOUSE



there also Sir Patrick Murray founded a monastery of Trinity friars in the year 1271; and soon after, Gilbert Murray, bishop of Caithness, built a church, the cathedral of his diocese; and its remains show that the building had a magnificence corresponding with the intent." After a reference to the Battle of Embo, he informs us that "a brother of the bishop's, however, fell in the fight, and is said to have been laid in a stone coffin above ground, near the font in the cathedral; in the place I found buried in the loose earth a well-cut figure of a warrior, perhaps representing the general, and had been placed on the lid of the coffin, as was customary at the time." His sketch shows that, besides the sarcophagus of Sir Richard, there were several interesting stone memorials, which have since disappeared. "The monument without the town, called Thane's-Cross, is commonly said to have been erected in memory of the above victory; but it is essentially different from any obelisk that has been said to have reference to such events." He thus describes the Earl's Cross:—"A large circle at the top is perforated, forming a cross within; the pillar plain; only in a frame on one side is carved the Sutherland arms, on the other the armorial ensigns of Caithness. Thence I should imagine it had been erected to settle some boundary, or in memory of some alliance formed between the earls of these contending counties."

Dr BETHUNE, who was minister of Dornoch for about forty years, contributed, in 1793, an article on his parish to the *Old Statistical Account of Scotland*.

It is, as one would expect, well-informed, and furnishes many interesting details regarding the social life of the parish at that time. Regarding the Cathedral he writes:—"Three aisles of the ancient cathedral form the present church; the fourth has long been in ruins. The church has undergone different repairs, and at a considerable expense. The Countess of Sutherland is patron. Most of the families of any distinction connected with the parish continue to bury within the church. In some measure to remedy this nuisance the church was lofted some years ago, at the height of seven feet from the ground. To this upper story, which is the present place of worship, the ascent is by stairs from without, the open area underneath still serving as a burying-ground. Notwithstanding this improvement, which is a considerable one, the church is, from its vast extent and stupendous height, a very incompetent place of worship, being extremely cold, and beyond the powers of an ordinary voice." He informs us that "all attend the parish church with the exception of one man, not a native of the parish."

Of the churchyard he says:—"Around the cathedral is the church-yard without any fence, and in the centre of the burgh. It is the market place. The county road runs through it. Some years ago, the heritors of the parish and magistrates of the burgh entered into a resolution to prohibit all further burying there. A piece of ground, without the town, was accordingly marked out for that use. A day was fixed beyond which no person was to be admitted to



the old ground, and public intimations to that purpose repeatedly made. But the prejudices of the people prevailed, and the project was relinquished."

A passage upon the career of Bishop Gilbert is followed by one in which he sets forth the history of the monasteries that of old were founded in Dornoch. "Writers tell us," he says, "that Dornoch was also the seat of one of the monasteries of the Trinity or Red Friars, otherwise called Marthurines, from their house at Paris dedicated to St. Marthurine. The object of the institution of this order appears to have been the redemption of Christian captives, to which purpose a third part of their revenue is said to have been destined. Of 13 of these, which are said to have subsisted in Scotland at the Reformation, one was at Dornoch, founded in 1271 by Sir Patrick Murray. Not the smallest vestige of the building, however, can be traced: the very site of it is unknown to-day. The lands belonging to the ministry of Berwick were given to this place after that city had fallen into the hands of the English." Regarding the burning of the town and Cathedral in 1570 he says, "but still the besieged defended themselves in the castle for a month longer." He speaks of "the ruins of the bishop's castle, which appears to have been a stately and sumptuous edifice."

His description of the burgh is rather suggestive of its poverty. It had "no landed property nor any other source of revenue beyond the customs levied at six annual fairs held here, and which are on the decline, as indeed the place itself is in the last stage

of decay. There is no other town or village in the parish, and this hardly deserves the name. It contains only four merchant shops, such as they are. The sheriff-substitute and sheriff-clerk of the county, and a messenger also, reside in the burgh, which has likewise a post-office and parochial school. But there is no physician, surgeon, or apothecary in the town or parish." He gives the population of the burgh as 500, and, discussing the character of the inhabitants, he says :—" Petty frauds and offences against society are prevalent here as well as elsewhere : little disingenuities, pilferings, and wilful encroachments, are also committed ; but the more daring and atrocious crimes are rarely heard of in this parish. The people here cannot be called industrious, but they are tenacious and frugal of what they get. If they can live without much exertion, they are content to live sparingly ; and, if they relax of their usual parsimony at fairs and other occasional meetings, they know how to make amends by habitual economy and abstemiousness. Upon the whole, they are a quiet, tractable sort of people, and under proper direction and encouragement, might be employed in manufactures, with advantage to themselves and to the country."

With reference to the population of the parish, he says :—" Although the registers have not been regularly kept here, it is universally believed that the population has increased within the last 30 years very considerably." As a matter of fact, the population in 1755 was 2780, and in 1792-3 it had decreased to 2541. He deplores the fact that, with the exception

of “two whisky distilleries and some flax spun by the women, no branch of trade whatever is cultivated here.” Discussing the climate, he writes:—“The air here is pure and salubrious, if we except the immediate vicinity of a large morass, extending from the town of Dornoch upwards of two miles to the westward, and lying along the county road. This has been a common. Some years ago, a scheme of division was formed, under the authority of the Court of Session. It was accordingly divided among the proprietors of the adjacent lands, and march stones set up; but still it lies undrained, and a nuisance, as before.” The reference here is to Lonemore, which was, for the most part, moss, and was allocated in 1783. Many of the inhabitants of Dornoch got their fuel there until it was exhausted, and they had to go to Londornoch, several miles away, for their supplies.

Dr Bethune devotes a paragraph to peat gathering. “The common mode of providing for winter firing here,” he writes, “is peculiarly injurious to health. During the season, in which the poor people are employed in carrying it out of the hills, they go to the moss, or so far in their way towards it in the evening, lie out in the open air all night, and load their horses in the morning. The great distance, badness of the roads, weakness of their horses and scantiness of pasture, impose this cruel necessity. There is no cart road to the moss, peat and turf being carried by means of an awkward apparatus on the backs of small, half-starved horses. In one or two districts of the parish, the people begin to see the

absurdity of this practice, and have actually made some attempts towards a better within the last two years; but nothing like a competent road has yet been executed. A great quantity of Moss Fir is found underground. It serves for light to the poorer sort; and logs are sometimes dug up, which are used even in building. This sort of timber is remarkably durable. At Evelicks, some appearances of coal have been observed."

The crops produced in his time were oats, bear, pease, potatoes, beans, and rye. Potatoes were the chief article of food, according to Dr Bethune, who says:—About the year 1758, potatoes became a principal article of provision here. Now they serve as the chief subsistence of the people during a third part of the year; with many for one-half; and with some even for two thirds of the year." In a footnote he says:—"Many poor families, who rent no land, are accommodated by others with a spot for this useful root, for the sake of the dung, soot or ashes which they lay upon it; and this, while it contributes essentially to the subsistence of the poorer sort, is also the most prevalent mode practised here for improving and meliorating the soil."

He paints a dark picture of the pitiable condition of the poor. There were eighty to one hundred persons on the roll, and the only provision for their support consisted of the church collections, which amounted to £7 stg. per annum. Out of that sum small salaries were paid to the session-clerk and other parochial officers, so that there was "but little relief

for the poor, who eke out a scanty living by wandering from parish to parish." He describes their great need which compels them "to go a great way to collect burdens of whins, broom, etc., nor does the dry dung that lies scattered on the fields escape them." "Nowhere," he adds, "can the poor be on a worse footing than here. The principal heritors do not reside in the parish, and therefore contribute nothing towards their support. It is to be wished that the poor were universally confined to their own parishes; that by assessments upon heritors, tenants and others in proportion to their several interests, holdings and circumstances, a certain provision was made for their subsistence." Dr Bethune shows his wonderful foresight and instinct for reform by thus anticipating the provision made for the poor in the Poor Law Act. His genius appears also in other improvements he suggests for the amelioration of the country, such as the abolition of the tax on coals, which he characterises as partial, oppressive, and absurd; the granting of proper leases to tenants of land; the introduction of manufactures. He considered that "the recent introduction of sheep to large tracts of ground in the neighbourhood affords a foundation for the woollen manufacture," and that "the soil was very favourable for the raising of flax."

The Rev. DONALD SAGE, A.M., Minister of Resolis, attended school at Dornoch during the years 1801-1803, and in his *Memorabilia Domestica* he gives his impressions and reminiscences of the place. He describes his feelings as, in the early morning, along



with his father and his brother, he rode from Embo to Dornoch. "As we approached it," he says, "I was almost breathless with wonder at the height of the steeple, and at the huge antique construction of the church." He gives a synopsis of the history of the Cathedral, and dwells approvingly on "the last and most splendid renovation of this ancient fabric . . . . by which it has become one of the most elegant structures, but one of the most unsuitable places of worship, in the Empire." The ruins of the west aisle were cleared away, and the nave erected, in chaste, modern-Gothic style, on the site, with a beautiful window and doorway in the gable; the other aisles were also renewed to correspond with it. Many additional windows were pierced, and filled with frosted glass; the bartizan of the tower was coped with stone; the steeple was built anew; and, instead of the old, crazy, one-faced, single-handed clock, a new one of the best workmanship was erected in the steeple, with four dial-plates, each furnished with an hour and minute hand." His description of the Bishop's Palace has already been quoted. He refers to the ruins of the Chantor's House with its "small vaulted apartments and a stone winding stair," and also to the ruins of the Deanery, which, he says, "was a plain building with a jamb, or back wing, attached to it." He notes the fact that, twenty years before he was born, it had been "occupied as an inn by a man named Morrison."

His description of Sheriff MacCulloch's house may be quoted as a picture of the better class house of



that time. "His house was situated to the south of the town, and at the foot of what was called the 'Vennel,' a small pathway leading from the churchyard. The house was of an antique cast. The parlour or dining-room had three windows, and on its walls hung several prints. In the north-west corner of the room and near the door, stood a handsome eight-day clock—a present which the Sheriff had received from the Sutherland Volunteers, of which he was Major. A large sofa stood on the opposite side, near the fire-place. The study was a small room upstairs, which was crammed with books and papers." Sage, describing his own bedroom, says, "it was at the top of the house, an attic above an attic—a dreary, cold place, having all the rude finishings of a coarse loft." The Sheriff, he says, "so closely resembled Mr Pitt, then Prime Minister, that once, when in London, Sheriff MacCulloch was mistaken for him on the streets, and addressed accordingly by several persons of distinction. . . Family worship was regularly observed morning and evening in the Sheriff's house. On Sabbath evenings he examined all the inmates of his household in their scriptural knowledge, concluding with an exposition of the chapter which he had read. . . . Every Saturday he went to Pronsay, where he presided at a fellowship meeting; and it was these occasions of Christian intercourse with his fellow-citizens, which they found peculiarly edifying, that embalmed his memory in the hearts of the survivors. He was a regular attendant at church; as, though Dr Bethune's

doctrine seemed to him to be dry enough, he, unlike others equally eminent for piety with himself, would not become an absentee, all the more that he held a public office. He did not fail, however, by his restlessness of manner to indicate when he was not being edified." His wife was a daughter of Dr Bethune's predecessor, the Rev. John Sutherland.

Among his acquaintances Mr Sage mentions Mr Taylor, Sheriff-Clerk; Mr Leslie, Procurator-Fiscal; and James Boag, architect. The fiscal was also an innkeeper. "All sorts of people," Mr Sage says, "frequented his inn; and often during the markets periodically held at Dornoch, fierce, disorderly fellows quarrelled and fought with each other there, like so many mastiffs. On such occasions Mrs Leslie, who was an amazon in size and strength, came in as 'third's man,' followed by her ostler, 'Ton'l,' as we usually called him, a strong fellow from Lochbroom. When her guests were fixed in each others throats Mrs Leslie made short work of them, by planting a grip with each hand on the back of their necks, tearing them apart, and finally by holding them until her ostler, by repeated and strong applications of his fists, had sufficiently impressed them with a sense of their conduct." To avoid any misconception of the redoubtable Mrs Leslie, Sage adds that "she possessed an amiable temper," and "her expansive countenance had a mild expression."

He describes Mr Boag as "a very old and a very odd man," who was a carpenter by trade, "and was by extraction from the south country." . . . "All

the churches and manses in Sutherland and Easter-Ross, built between 1760 and 1804, were according to the plans, and were the workmanship of James Boag. These plans were in almost all cases identical; that is, for churches, long, narrow buildings, much resembling granaries, in which convenience and acoustics were equally ignored.”

His picture of the Dornoch fairs of his time merits reproduction :—“ The public fairs of this little county town made a considerable stir. From the Ord-head to the Meikle Ferry, almost every man, woman, and child attended the Dornoch market. The market stance was the churchyard. Dornoch was what might strictly be called an Episcopalian town; and the consecrated environs of the Cathedral was just the place which the men of those days would choose either for burying their dead, or holding their markets. The churchyard therefore became the only public square within the town. The evening previous to the market was a busy one. A long train of heavily-loaded carts might be seen wending their weary way into the town, more particularly from Tain, by the Meikle Ferry. The merchants’ booths, or tents, were then set up, made of canvas stretched upon poles inserted several feet into the ground, even into graves and deep enough to reach the coffins. The fair commenced about 12 o’clock noon next day, and lasted for two days and a half. During its continuance, every sort of saleable article was bought and sold, whether of home or foreign manufacture. . . . The bustle and variety of the scene very much

impressed me. . . . There we noticed a bevy of young lasses, in best bib and tucker, accompanied by their bachelors, who treated them with gingerbread, ribbons, and whisky. Next came a recruiting party, marching, "with gallant step and slow," through the crowd, headed by the sergeant, sword in hand, and followed by the corporal and two or three privates, each with his weapon glancing in the sunlight. From one part of the crowd might be heard the loud laugh that bespoke the gay and jovial meeting of former acquaintanceship, now again revived; from another, the incessant shrill of little toy trumpets, which fond mothers had furnished to their younger children, and with which the little urchins kept up an unceasing clangour."

He describes "a bloody fray" which occurred in the churchyard after a funeral from Creich. "The body was accompanied by an immense crowd, both of the gentry and peasantry. In the evening, after the burial, there was a dreadful fight. The parishioners of Dornoch and those of Creich quarrelled with each other, and fists, cudgels, stones and other missiles, were put in requisition. . . . I sat on a gravestone, at the gable of the ruined aisle of the cathedral, looking at the conflict. Broken heads, blood trickling over enraged faces, yells of rage, oaths and curses, are my reminiscences of the event." Dr Bethune was a spectator of the fight, and "he was rudely attacked by two outrageous men from Creich." But some of his parishioners intervened, "and his assailants measured their length on the highway."

He designates Dornoch as, “in point of extent, commerce and population, the ‘Old Sarum’ of Scotland,” and he thus describes its poverty-stricken condition:—“But the trade of Dornoch is at present a nonentity. Its markets, so flourishing in former times, have almost ceased to exist. Its population has decreased to about one half the number it used to be. Its merchants, or shopkeepers, are not more than two or three; if a retailer sets up in any part of the parish or county he succeeds, but if he removes to Dornoch he almost immediately becomes a bankrupt. There seems, in short, to hang over the place a sort of fatality, a blighting influence, which, like the Pontine marshes at Rome to cattle, is fatal to trade, house-building, mercantile enterprise, or even to the increase of the *genus homo* in this ill-starred and expiring Highland burgh.” Happily, his gloomy picture of the Dornoch of his day has long ago ceased to be the description of the burgh.

The last writer, from whose article on Dornoch in the *New Statistical Account for Scotland* the following extracts are taken, was minister of the parish for over a quarter of a century. The Rev. ANGUS KENNEDY, A.M., was translated from Lairg to Dornoch in 1817, and was greatly esteemed for his goodness, kindliness, and devotion to the best interests of his people. His account of Dornoch was written in 1834, and a comparison of his information and statistics with those of Dr Bethune, published forty years before, is both interesting and instructive. Under the heading of Meteorology, he states that “the climate may be

called mild and healthy, considering the northern latitude. Snow seldom remains long on the sea-coast; and for several years there have not been the same heavy and long-continued falls of snow and the same intense frosts as in former times." In a footnote he adds: "As a proof of the mildness of our climate, pheasants have been recently introduced at Skibo; they are doing well, and are likely to increase. Walnuts also frequently ripen in the garden at Skibo; and a very fine *Ilex* tree growing there is a proof of the favourable climate." "Among the prognostics of unfavourable weather" he noted "the tremendous noise that proceeds from the sand banks called Gizzing-Briggs, so called from the peculiar sound they make. . . . It is observed, also, that the appearances of the *Aurora borealis*, which are sometimes very vivid, are commonly followed by cold and stormy weather."

He observes that "coal was found at Clashmore, in this parish; it was submitted to Sir Humphry Davy's inspection, and by him pronounced to be similar to that of Brora." He informs us that "abundance of excellent cockles may be found near the town when the tide recedes, and westward to the Meikle Ferry. They are much sought after in their season, and carried to a considerable distance to the interior of the country."

The Sutherland vault in the Cathedral chancel cannot have been completed at the time he wrote, as we gather from the following paragraph:—"The noble family of Sutherland have a burying-place



within the church, where the mortal remains of several of its members are laid. Over it a neat monument has been erected to the memory of the last Earl and the Countess of Sutherland, the parents of the now Duchess Countess of Sutherland, who both died in the flower of youth, the one ten days after the other, at Bath, in the year 1766, and were buried in one grave in the church at Holyrood-House. His lordship had only attained the age of thirty-two, and her ladyship that of twenty-six. This amiable pair were not less ennobled by their shining virtues than by their high rank. Their humane dispositions and condescending manners had greatly endeared them to all orders of society; and their untimely death was deeply felt and universally deplored."

The Earl's Cross, which in Dr Bethune's time had been undermined, and had for long lain in fragments on the ground, had lately been repaired at the instance of the Countess of Sutherland, as Mr Sage gives us to understand. It still stands to mark the old boundary between the lands of the Bishop and those of the Earl of Sutherland.

The population of the parish, according to the census returns, had increased from 3100 in 1821 to 3380 in 1831. Mr Kennedy states that "the increase would have been greater but for emigration to America during that and the previous year. It is but justice to the landed proprietors," he says, "to add that this emigration was purely voluntary on the part of the emigrants; that most of them left the parish in comfortable circumstances; and that the situations

which they left open were soon occupied by others. The population, it may safely be asserted, is still on the increase."

Gaelic was still "the vernacular language"; but he notes that "this language has lost ground considerably during the last twenty-five years, owing to the influx into the parish, from various parts of the kingdom, of persons who speak the English language, but especially to the introduction of schools, first Gaelic and then English, into every district of the parish." He observes, however, that the common people prefer to talk Gaelic, and that larger congregations attend the Gaelic than the English services. "Nevertheless," he writes, "the English is making rapid encroachments on our ancient language; and it is not improbable that, in the course of sixty or seventy years, the latter may be extinct."

He notes a considerable improvement in the housing of the people. "Instead of their feal-houses, in which it was scarcely possible to maintain cleanliness, they have now generally neat cottages, built of stone and clay, and harled with lime, having chimneys, instead of the fire-place being in the middle of the house, as formerly,—there being no outlet for smoke except by the door, or a hole in the roof." Regarding the character of the people, he says that, "on the whole, they are a moral and religious people; industrious, peaceable, and respectful to their superiors. With very few exceptions, they regularly attend public worship; and their decent appearance on Sabbath days indicates their comfortable circumstances."

Mr Kennedy notes the great improvements in agriculture that had been achieved “during the last fifteen or twenty years.” Waste land, too, had been brought into cultivation, and he gives one notable instance :—“Among the improvements on waste-land it may be mentioned that the fresh-water lake, at a place called Balvraid, near the county road, has been thoroughly drained and prepared, and is now laid down in crop. The highly improved appearance of the spot holds out a prospect of remunerating the expense in a few years. It may be observed also, that, by the erection of the earthen mound across the estuary of the Little Ferry, from thirty to forty acres of valuable carse ground, over which the tide formerly used to flow, have been brought under the plough, and are now carrying heavy crops of wheat, etc.”

He estimates the population of the burgh at “little more than 500,” and notes that it “appears to be rather on the increase. . . . The northern royal mail-coach passes through the town twice every day. This is an advantage to the burgh, as strangers travelling by the coach for business or for pleasure may find good entertainment in a commodious and well-kept inn. . . . Within the last twenty years there was a considerable number of small uncomfortable feal-houses in the town; but these gradually gave way to neat and comfortable cottages, most of them two stories high. The streets are clean, and the approaches to the town from every quarter have been much improved. The communication with the town is open in every direction by excellent roads and

bridges, which are kept in annual repair." He notes with satisfaction that "there are no tolls. Not a toll is to be seen in the county of Sutherland. Hence, carriages, gigs, and carts may be seen on Sabbath days carrying some of the good people to church." That the church services were well attended may be gathered from his statement that, though in 1816 "additional accommodation was given by the erection of a gallery in the easter aisle . . . there is not yet sufficient accommodation for an increasing population. Another gallery is necessary. . . . It is a well-known fact, that the pews are generally crowded to inconvenience, and that, in fine weather, some have to sit on the tops of the pews for want of room."

Mr Kennedy gives interesting details regarding education in the parish. "There are," he says, "seven schools in the parish, of which three are in the town,—the parochial school, a female school on the second patent of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and another female school without salary, the teacher depending on the school fees. In the landward parish are two schools on the General Assembly's scheme, and two on that of the Glasgow Auxiliary Gaelic School Society; besides which, the people in remote small districts hire a young lad to teach their children during the winter quarter; after which the school breaks up till next winter. The Holy Scriptures and the Assembly's Shorter Catechism are taught in all these schools. Many are taught also to read the Bible in Gaelic. Dr Thomson's English school-books

are introduced into most of them. Arithmetic, book-keeping, English grammar, and Latin are taught. The parochial schoolmaster has the maximum salary, with a large house and garden. The school fees are of no great value,—not exceeding £6. The teachers belonging to the Glasgow Society have £14 each; those employed by the General Assembly's Committee, have each £20 of salary, besides fees. Suitable dwelling and school-houses are provided by the heritors in all cases. The schoolmistress at Dornoch has a salary of £8, with a good house and garden."

He observes that "so desirous are the people to give the advantages of education to their children that some are sent to school at the age of five; that female education is better attended to than formerly; and that during last winter nearly 500 attended schools." He had to admit, however, that "about 700 persons in the parish are unable to read, above six years of age; and about 250, betwixt the years of six and fifteen."

He notes the existence of a not too successful Friendly Society, and the recent establishment of a Savings Bank, "under the patronage of the noble family of Sutherland, who give every encouragement to the people to vest their money in it, and to promote provident habits among the working-classes." The number of people in receipt of parochial relief he estimates "on an average at from 120 to 130." The poor's fund annually distributed consisted of about £36 from church collections, £3 10s from mortcloth dues, a donation of £6 from the Duchess Countess of Suther-

land, and £25, the interest on £500, “which the late Duke of Sutherland, who did not need to borrow money, very humanely took from the Kirk-Session and allowed the above liberal interest for it.” These extracts provide material from which the reader can form some idea of the social, moral and religious condition of the parish during the period they cover.



## NOTES

## CHAPTER I

- 1 *Scotland in Pagan Times*, I, 381.
- 2 *Second Report and Inventory of Monuments in Sutherland*, p. xxv.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- 4 *Scotland in Pagan Times.*"

## CHAPTER II

- 1 Gildas, Sec. 15-21.
- 2 Bede, *Eccles. Hist.*, I, 1.
- 3 Nennius, Sec. 12 (Giles' Edition).
- 4 Gaelic Society *Transactions*, vol. xxx, pp. 257, 260.
- 5 *Scotsman's* Report of Lecture.
- 6 *Place Names of Ross*, p. xlvii.
- 7 Skene's *Celtic Scotland*.
- 8 *The Pictish Nation*, p. 80.
- 9 *Chronicle of the Picts and Scots*, p. 25.
- 10 *The Origins of Christianity in Aberdeenshire*, p. 2.
- 11 It is but right to add that several authorities, including Prof. W. J. Watson, hold that the patron saint of Dornoch was St. Barr of Cork, whose day was Sept. 25th, the original date of Barr's Fair in Dornoch. His full name was Findbarr, and he died about 610 A.D. Prof. Watson notes that Findbarr of Magh Bhile is never, to his knowledge, called Barr, and that the Martyrology of Aberdeen, under Sept. 25, the day of St. Findbarr of Cork, states that he was bishop of Caithness.
- 12 *Vide* "Embo Invocation" in Appendix, p.
- 13 The Rev. A. B. Scott had this information from the late Dr Grant, who was present when the discovery was made.
- 14 Dasent's *Ork. Saga*, p. 6.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 16 *History of the Province of Cat*, p. 67.

## CHAPTER III

1 *Register of Dunfermline*, No. 23, p. 14.

2 *Ibid.*, No. 24.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 22.

4 *Epist. Innocent III*, lib. I, No. 218.

5 *Chronica de Mailros*, p. 135.

6 *Epist. Innocent III*, lib. I, No. 218.

7 *Ibid.*, lib. V, No. 77.

8 *Chron. de Mailros*, p. 135.

9 *Genealogy of Earls of Sutherland*, p. 30.

10 *Ork. Saga*, p. 421.

11 *Chron. de Mailros*, pp. 139, 150.

12 *Forduni Scot.*, VIII, 26.

13 Original at Dunrobin. *Sutherland Book*, vol. III, p. 1.

14 Do. *Ibid.*, p. 3. The diocese of Caithness had evidently no rural deaneries, but just a Cathedral dean. Rectors drew their tithes independently of the bishop, while vicars were paid only so much tithe as was allotted to them by the bishop. Chaplainries were humbler offices and had special endowments. The chapter had the control and management of the common property of the Cathedral, and met once a week, usually on Saturdays, mainly for the exercise of discipline. The inclusion of the Abbot of Scone among the canons may have had its origin in the grant made by Earl Harold to the monks of Scone of a mark of silver yearly "for the souls of my predecessors and for my own soul and for the soul of my wife." He had to supply a priest-vicar to the Cathedral; but he was not bound to residence. The five dignified clergy occupied the choir stalls. The vicars of the choir were the deputies of the canons, who did duty for them in their absence. Among the minor offices in the Cathedral of which mention is made were those of Penitentiary, Sacrist, Bishop's Clerk, Bishop's Vicar, Chaplains of the Choir, Vicar Penitentiary, Curate, Staller.

15 *Chron. de Mailros*.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Regist. Morav.*, p. 460.

18 *Genealogy of Earls of Sutherland*, p. 32.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

20 *Acta Parl. Scot.*, vol. I, p. 83.

21 *Genealogy of Earls of Sutherland*, p. 32.

22 Original in the Papal Archives. *Scotia Sacra*.

22a The Trinity or Red Friars were instituted in 1198 by St. John of Malta. The houses of the order were called hospitals, and their superior was "Minister." Their object was to redeem slaves—especially Christians—from the Turks. Sir Patrick also founded a monastery at Cromarty in the same year.

- 23 The mandate is printed in Theiner's *Vet. Monumenta*, p. 104, No. 259. The agreement is printed in the *Sutherland Book*, vol. III, p. 7. Facsimile.
- 24 Theiner's *Vet. Monumenta*, p. 112.
- 25 *Rotuli Scotiæ*, vol. I, 4, 5.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 6a.
- 27 *Acta Parl. Scot.*, vol. I, p. 85.
- 28 *Rot. Scot.*, vol. I, p. 6.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 30 Theiner's *Vet. Mon.*, p. 163, No. 359.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 164, No. 360.
- 32 Bain's *Calendar of Documents*, vol. II, p. 408.
- 33 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 39.
- 34 *Regista Vat.*, 52, fol. 103d.
- 35 *Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. I, p. 114.
- 36 Theiner's *Vet. Mon.*, p. 276, No. 548.
- 37 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 52.
- 38 Theiner's *Vet. Mon.*, p. 278, No. 552.
- 39 *The Sutherland Book*, vol. III, p. 18.
- 40 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, I, No. 36.
- 41 Theiner's *Vet. Mon.*, p. 333, No. 681.
- 42 *Papal Petitions*, I, p. 565.
- 43 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 74.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 45 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, II, No. 1404. Skelbo should be Skibo. In the original charter it is Skeboll.
- 46 The surname Sutherland has been omitted. *Miscellany of Bannatyne Club*, vol. III.
- 47 *Calendar of Papal Registers. Reg. Mag. Sig.*, VI, No. 18.
- 48 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, VIII, No. 123.

## CHAPTER IV.

- 1 In the Appendix is given the precept legitimizing Bishop Andrew and his brother, George Stewart, Archdeacon of Caithness.
- 2 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 93.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4.
- 4 *Sutherland Charters*.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *The Sutherland Book*, III, p. 68.
- 7 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 102.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- 9 *Sutherland Charters*.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*

12 Sutherland Charters. *Sutherland Book*, III, No. 73.

13 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, No. 74 and 79.

14 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, No. 95.

15 *Ibid.* *Orig. Paroch.*, II, p. 639.

16 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 641.

18a *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 619.

19 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 111.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

21 Sutherland Charters. *Sutherland Book*, III, 86.

22 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, IV, 2578.

23 Sutherland Charters.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Acta Parl. Scot.*, II, pp. 579-80.

26 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, V, No. 561. Sutherland Charters.

27 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*, IV, No. 2782.

29 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 150.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

33 *Old Dornoch*, p. 13.

34 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, V, No. 1283.

35 Sutherland Charters. *Orig. Paroch.*, II, 624. Bishop Dowden says that "it was a common practice for persons of position and means to endow an altar in the Cathedral, where masses would be sung or said for the welfare of the founder or others while alive, and for the repose of their souls after death. Sometimes a priest distinct from the vicars of the choir was appointed to this duty, but often the chaplaincy was given to one of the vicars."

36 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 622.

39 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 62.

41 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, V, No. 1689.

42 *Ibid.*, No. 1729.

43 Sutherland Charters. *Orig. Paroch.*, II, p. 618.

44 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*

46 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, vol. V, No. 72.

47 *Ibid.*, vol. IV, No. 2995.

48 *Ibid.*, vol. V, No. 1077.

49 *Ibid.*, vol. V, No. 1053.

- 50 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, vol. iv, No. 2965.  
 51 Sutherland Charters. *Orig. Paroch.*, II, p. 641.  
 52 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 642.  
 53 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 624.  
 54 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 642.  
 55 Calderwood, III, p. 145.

## CHAPTER V

- 1 Sutherland Charters. *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, v, No. 277.  
 2 *P.C. Reg.*, iv, 60. Note.  
 3 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, iv, No. 1054.  
 4 *Ibid.*, v, No. 2180.  
 5 Sutherland Charters. *Orig. Paroch.*, II, p. 618.  
 6 *Acta Parl. Scot.*, III, 583.  
 7 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 256.  
 8 *Old Dornoch*, p. 55.  
 9 *P.C. Reg.*, v, 218 (First Series).  
 10 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 252.  
 11 *Ibid.*, p. 239.  
 12 Sutherland Charters. *Orig. Paroch.*, II, p. 644.  
 13 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*  
 14 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, p. 645.  
 15 Calderwood's Hist., VI., p. 493.  
 16 *P.C. Reg.*, VIII, 480; IX, 238.  
 17 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 255.  
 18 Sutherland Charters. *Orig. Paroch.*, II, p. 637.  
 19 *Old Dornoch*, pp. 56-7.  
 20 Sutherland Charters.  
 21 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 256.  
 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 257-8.  
 23 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, vol. ix, No. 1967. I am indebted to Miss Joass, Golspie, for the photograph of the stone, which Dr Joass removed, deposited in the Dunrobin Museum.  
 24 *Reg. Privy Council*, VIII., p. 189.  
 25 Sutherland Letters. *Sutherland Book*, I, p. 188.  
 26 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 309.  
 27 Sutherland Letters.  
 28 *Ibid.*  
 29 *Ibid.*  
 30 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, pp. 309-10. Dean Gray was twice married. His first wife was Barbara Keith, daughter of the parson of Duffus. Their son Robert became Provost of Dornoch; he was served heir to his father on 13th June, 1656.  
 31 *Ibid.*, p. 309.  
 32 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, VI, No. 799.

- 33 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, pp. 309-10.
- 34 *Reg. Mag. Sig.*, vol. vi, No. 381.
- 35 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, No. 2141.
- 36 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, No. 2155.
- 37 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, No. 2102.
- 38 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 362.
- 39 Sutherland Tutor Accounts.
- 40 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 346.
- 41 Sutherland Tutor Accounts.
- 42 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, pp. 364-5.
- 43 *Old Dornoch*, p. 68.
- 44 *Reg. Privy Council*. For my copy of this document I am indebted to Mr D. Murray Rose.
- 45 Sutherland Letters. *Sutherland Book*, vol. ii.
- 46 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, pp. 397-8.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 382.
- 48 *P.C. Reg.*, xiii, 125.
- 49 *Orig. Lit. Eccl.*, ii, 709.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 710-11.

## CHAPTER VI

- 1 Sutherland Letters. *S.B.*, ii, 150-1.
- 2 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 406.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 4 *Acta Parl. Scot.*, v, 381.
- 5 *Ibid.*, vi.
- 6 *Ibid.*, ii, 249.
- 7 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 49.
- 8 Sutherland Charters.
- 9 *Old Dornoch*, p. 77.
- 10 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 488.
- 11 *Acta Parl. Scot.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Sutherland Charters. *R.M.S.*, vol. viii, No. 1045. My attention has been drawn by Mr McInnes to a reference to windmills by Mr Cosmo Innes in his *Scotland in the Middle Ages*, where he says : —“ On the estates of the monasteries, water-mills and wind-mills were used for grinding corn in the thirteenth century and previously, though the rude process of the hand-mill kept its ground in some districts of Scotland to a recent period.”
- 14 Mrs Gray was a niece of Earl Winton.
- 15 *Old Dornoch*, p. 79.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 82.



- 19 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 562.
- 20 *Graham of Deuchrie's Account of Glencairn's Expedition*.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 176-8.
- 22 *Sutherland Charters. Orig. Paroch.*, p. 639.
- 23 *Genealogy of the Earls of Sutherland*, p. 6.
- 24 *Sutherland Letters*.
- 25 *Ibid. Sutherland Book*, I.
- 26 *Ibid. Ibid.*, II.
- 27 *Ibid. Ibid.*, II.
- 28 *Reg. Privy Council*, VIII, 1683.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 1684.

## CHAPTER VII

1 George, 14th Earl of Sutherland, succeeded his brother in 1679, and died in 1703.

2 Meal is for Mail=Rent; G. *Mål*.

3 The glebe was not four acres in extent.

4 Mr H. M. Mackay tried in vain to identify this meeting-house. One suggestion is that it stood on the site now occupied by the Masonic Buildings.

5 One wonders if this description applied only to the nave.

6 Templebar was the site on which the ancient church of St. Barr stood. It was in the eastern part of the old churchyard, and traces of its foundations were unearthed by the sexton when digging a grave there a few months ago.

7 3000 merks Scots amounted to about £165 stg.

8 The Synod vetoed the translation on the ground that it was not for the greater good of the Church.

9 Mr Walter Ross was inducted to Creich on January 14th, 1714.

10 Mr Kirk had evidently resumed services in the partially repaired kirk.

11 It may have been later, as work was probably suspended owing to the disorders of the time. In August, 1715, Lord Strathnaver was raising a force which, according to the Earl's instructions, was "to be all in the links of Dornoch by Teusday next."

12 Earl John Roy, in his narrative of the part he played in the suppression of the 'Fifteen Rebellion, sheds some light upon the contribution made by the county towards that achievement. *Vide Sutherland Book*, I, 361-3.

13 The superstitious belief in the power of the evil eye to exercise an injurious effect upon persons, cattle, and all kinds of property is of ancient origin. It still persists, to some extent, in the Highlands.

14 The Royal Schools were so called because they owed their origin to a fund raised by Parliament for planting schools in Highland parishes.

15 The "carriage" was the carting for which tenants were bound under their leases.

16 So essential was the Session Bailie to the Kirk Session that when, on one occasion, there was no magistrate among the elders, authority was asked by the Session from the Earl of Sutherland for one of their number to be invested with magisterial powers.

17 *Vide* p. 164.

18 Stallinger.—Stallage was the right of erecting stalls or booths at fairs.

19 The reference is to the war with Spain and France in 1762-3. It was short, but the British Army had several great victories. Great Britain gained Havana and the Philippine Islands from Spain, and the finest of her West India possessions from France. Both countries soon sought peace, and in February, 1763, the Treaty of Paris was made, by which France ceded Canada, and Spain gave over Florida to Britain.

20 *Vide Ancient Tolbooths of Dornoch*, p. 15.

21 *Vide* extract from *Old Ross-shire and Scotland*, by W. Macgill, in Appendix.

22 *Vide* chapter on "Witchcraft in Sutherland."

23 *Vide* chapter on "The 'Forty-Five.'"

24 The Rev. Hector Pape retained his charge after the Revolution, and was the last clergyman in Sutherland to wear a surplice.

25 Lateran may be a form of Lettern, which was the reading-desk.

26 *Old Dornoch*, p. 94.

27 The tokens now in use bear the date 1789.

28 *Vide* Appendix, p.

29 *Sutherland Book*, vol. II, p. 271.

30 Mr Kirk, in addition to Bishopfield and Croftmore, had lands called Shillinghill, and a heritable bond over "the Davach lands of Rearquhar." Miss Ann was his only daughter.

31 *Old Dornoch*, pp. 110, 111.

32 Countess Mary's devotion to her husband in his last illness was such that, as she wrote to a friend on May 10th, 1766, she "had not had her clothes off for sixteen nights." Even after she had caught the infection, she refused to leave his bedside until she collapsed.

33 Her literary friends in after years included Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, and George Chalmers, author of *Caledonia*. She was also an artist, and excelled in the painting of landscapes in water-colour.

## CHAPTER VIII

- 1 Sutherland Letters. *Sutherland Book*, vol. I.
- 2 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.* *Ibid.*, vol. II.
- 7 *Sutherland Book*, vol. I.
- 8 Letters from Overskibo in Dunrobin charter-room.
- 9 *The Earls of Cromartie*, vol. II.
- 10 *General History of the Highlands*, vol. II.
- 11 Sutherland Papers. *Sutherland Book*, vol. I.
- 12 *The Earls of Cromartie*, vol. II.

## CHAPTER IX

- 1 Sage's *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 151.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 152.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- 5 The Dornoch Session Records.
- 6 The original report.
- 7 Town Council Records, vol. III, p. 4.
- 8 *Ibid.*, folio 43.
- 9 *The Earls of Cromartie*, vol. II.
- 10 *Ibid.*, folio 7.
- 11 *Ibid.*, folio 18.
- 12 *Ibid.*, folio 10.
- 13 *Ibid.*, folio 37.
- 14 *Ibid.*, folio 71.
- 15 *Ibid.*, folio 29.
- 16 *Ibid.*, *ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Minute of Meeting.
- 19 *Memorabilia Domestica*, p. 68.
- 20 Dornoch Presbytery Records.
- 21 Town Council Records, vol. III, folio 77.
- 22 *Ibid.*, folio 63.
- 23 *Ibid.*, folio 177.
- 24 *Ibid.*, do.
- 25 *Ibid.*, folio 41.
- 26 *Ibid.*, do.
- 27 *Ibid.*, folio 39.
- 28 *Ibid.*, folio 96.
- 29 *Ibid.*, folio 161.

- 30 Town Council Records, vol. III, folio 161.
- 31 *Ibid.*, folio 162.
- 32 *Ibid.*, do.
- 33 *Life and Trial of Hugh Macleod.*
- 34 *John Laurie*, by D. W. Kemp, p. 29.
- 35 Town Council Records, vol. III, folio 155.
- 36 *Caithness and Sutherland*, p. 147.
- 37 Town Council Records, vol. III, folio 208.
- 38 *Ibid.*, folio 210.
- 39 *Loch's Memoir of the First Duke of Sutherland.*
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER X

1 The contractor was William Leslie of Nethermuir, afterwards (1869-73) Lord Provost of Aberdeen. He also erected the new buildings at Dunrobin Castle between 1845 and 1849. All the masons employed on the Cathedral were brought from Aberdeen. I owe this and other similar information to Mr Fred Nicholson, church officer, whose grandfather was one of these masons. For Lord Provost Leslie see A. M. Munro, *Memorials of the Aldermen, Provosts, and Lord Provosts of Aberdeen*, pp. 288-9.

2 The drawings are on 19 sheets, dated from 131 George Street [Edinburgh], 23rd February, 11th and 12th May, 1835. They are beautiful examples of architectural draughtsmanship, but it should be noted that they reveal various divergencies between the actual scaling and the measurements written on the drawings. Four sheets (Nos. 14, 18, 19, and 21) are wanting. The plans are now preserved in the office of Burn's grand-nephew, Mr H. L. Anderson, architect, 6 Stratton Street, London, W.1, who most kindly placed them at the disposal of Mr Horne and myself. Mr Horne writes me, April 30th, 1924: "I came across an entry in an old account book recently — 'Paid Wm. Burn for plans of Dornoch Cathedral £225 6s 7d. Aug. 31, 1835.' "

3 *Chronica de Mailros*, ed. J. Stevenson, p. 150.

4 *Rotuli Scotiae*, vol. I, pp. 5-6.

5 Sir Robert Gordon, *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, pp. 156-8.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 255.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 309-10, 346; Sir William Fraser, *The Sutherland Book*, vol. I, pp. 222-3, vol. II, pp. 16, 339.

8 H. M. Mackay, *Old Dornoch, its Traditions and Legends*, pp. 94-5.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 111-3.

10 *Memorabilia Domestica*, 2nd ed., p. 125.

11 Reproduced in *The Sutherland Book*, vol. I, p. 13.

12 *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects of North Britain*, vol. II.

13 For the restoration see *Old Dornoch*, pp. 137-42; *Memorabilia Domestica*, 2nd ed., pp. 125-6; also Hugh F. Campbell, "The Cathedral of Caithness at Dornoch" in *Transactions of the Aberdeen Ecclesiological Society*, 1891, pp. 39-41.

14 The ancient quarries on the Links are still pointed out—see article on "Dornoch Cathedral" in *Northern Times*, 20th March, 1924.

15 *Old Dornoch*, pp. 108, 140.

15a Bishop Richard Pococke's *Tours in Scotland*, ed. D. W. Kemp, p. 168. Curiously enough, the same mistake is made by Cordiner, who describes the ruined part as "the altar end"; and, following Cordiner, by Capt. J. Henderson, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Sutherland*, 1812; plate facing p. 167.

16 At the cathedrals of Iona, Dunkeld, and Dunblane, the nave and not the choir was abandoned.

17 Mr Nicholson tells me his grandfather was employed on this stair, doubtless in making the new steps, coping, and windows.

18 See my *The Castle of Kildrummy*, pp. 88-90, 129.

19 Sir Robert Gordon, *Genealogical History*, p. 94, records that Bishop Andrew Stewart, who died 17th June, 1518, "was bureid in the queer of the Cathedrall church of the dyocie of Catteynes, at Dornogh." This may have been his tomb.

20 It is interesting to note that in his plaster work Burn reproduced the design of the shafted and banded arcading on the east gable, but in the side walls he finished off the caps below in plaster corbel-wise. A task for some future benefactor, or some fresh local effort, will be to restore the shafts and bring the whole arcade back into its original condition.

21 Dr Honeyman's restoration here, although very beautiful in itself, seems to me hardly in keeping with the original design.

22 These pockets have now been built up.

23 *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, vol. II, part II, p. 623, footnote 10.

24 Dr J. R. Craven, *History of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Caithness*, p. 236.

25 *Old Dornoch*, p. 143.

26 *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, pp. 32-3.

27 It should be noted that there is no foundation in fact for the popular idea that the crossing of the legs in a mailed effigy indicates that the person commemorated had been a Crusader. The crossed legs are merely a symbolical attitude of repose. The phenomenon is peculiar to Britain, and is found from about the middle of the

thirteenth to the middle of the fourteenth centuries, or during the period when flexible chain mail, adapted to such an attitude, was in vogue. With the introduction of the more rigid armour of jointed plate the practice of representing the legs crossed fell into disuse.

<sup>28</sup> *Genealogical History of the Earldom of Sutherland*, pp. 6, 31. Sidderay is the modern Cyderhall. This statement of Sir Robert is of some interest in view of the suggestion made by Mr F. C. Eeles that medieval glass was probably not made in Scotland—see *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 1914-15, p. 91.

<sup>29</sup> Sage, in describing the restoration, says that "the bartisan of the tower was coped with stone"—*Memorabilia Domestica*, 2nd ed., p. 125.

<sup>30</sup> According to Sage, *ibid.*, "the steeple was built anew"; Mackay, *Old Dornoch*, p. 94, states that it was "practically rebuilt."

<sup>31</sup> *The Sutherland Book*, vol. III, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, vol. II, part II, p. 607.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 610.

<sup>34</sup> *Old Dornoch*, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*: cf. *Origines Parochiales*, *ut supra*, p. 623.

<sup>36</sup> *The Sutherland Book*, vol. II, p. 339.

<sup>37</sup> "In this Transept between the years 1247 and 1766 were deposited the remains of many of the Earls of Sutherland, and of various branches of that antient family. 1837."

<sup>38</sup> Craven, *Diocese of Caithness*, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> The reading here is doubtful.

<sup>40</sup> This word is almost weathered out: it may be "Alex.r"

<sup>41</sup> This letter is reversed on the stone.

<sup>42</sup> For this family see article on "Dornoch Cathedral" in *Northern Times*, 20th March, 1924.

<sup>43</sup> Sermon by the Right Rev. Dr Inch, Moderator of the U.F. Church, on the occasion of the Septcentenary Celebration, 27th August, 1924.



## APPENDICES.

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### DORNOCH PLACE NAMES

FOR all to whom the dim and distant past makes its appeal the place names of a district have an interest and value of their own, and that because of the light they shed upon those remote days of which we know so comparatively little. They are but rays in the darkness; but they are none the less precious. In them, to some extent, is enshrined the history of a country, for many of them perpetuate the memory of some more or less important event from which the name derives its origin. Thus place names have an historical value, though many of the incidents that gave them birth have been lost in the mists of antiquity. Many of them have also a pictorial value. That is specially true of Gaelic names of places. For the most part they are descriptive of some striking natural feature, which distinguished each place, and impressed the eye. After the lapse of centuries even, and notwithstanding the manifold changes the passing years bring about, those distinctive features remain, and, as a rule, can be recognised without difficulty. Thus an acquaintance with the natural features of places is of great value in the study of the origin of their names; but their importance must not be exaggerated. The value of old spellings of place names, as they appear in charters and records, is considerably diminished by the fact that these were to a great extent written by men who had no knowledge of Gaelic, and spelled phonetically. That accounts for the diversity in the spelling of the same names in these old documents. The distortion of the original forms of names owing to faulty pronunciation is another barrier to the discovery of their origin, that meets one more especially in such districts as the Parish of Dornoch. It is becoming increasingly difficult to get the old pronunciation of Gaelic

names of places. While Gaelic is the source of most of the Dornoch place names, there are a few of Pictish and Norse origin, the latter, for most part, confined to the seaboard. Many of the names taken from charters and old Session Records have become practically obsolete, and their location and derivation have become a matter of some difficulty. These are given separately after the more familiar ones, which, for greater convenience, are arranged in alphabetical order.

I am greatly indebted to Professor Watson, Edinburgh, for having kindly given me the benefit of his unique knowledge of the subject. Some of my derivations, however, do not satisfy him; for these he has no responsibility.

Achlean—G. *achadh*, field, and *leathan*, broad: Broadfield.

It was below Pitgrudy.

Achley—1570 Achluy, which is the old Gaelic pronunciation.

G. *achadh*, field, and gen. of *luogh*, calf. Its situation is a good one for rearing cattle.

Achinchanter—The Cantor or Precentor's Field. In Bishop Gilbert's charter of the 13th century the whole land of Huchtherhinche is allotted to the Precentor. Probably derived from G. *uachdar*, upper, and *innis*, pasture. Very probably the "Hoctor Common" granted to Bishop Andrew by David I., c. 1150.

Achintreasurich—Treasurer's Field. It was the W. part of Hilton of Embo.

Achthoiche—This name appears in a decree of 1686 regarding marches. It is said to be to the N.E. of Pronsy, a marshy place where vapour rises, and thus may probably be derived from G. *toit*, vapour.

Achurach—Evidently situated to the N. of the Burgh. G. *urach*, dusty. Probably from the dryness of the soil and dust-storms which occur here with high winds.

Achnacaorach—Adjoining the former. G. *caoraich*, sheep, *i.e.* Sheepfield.

Achanduach—Situation not identified. Probably for *achadh nan dumhach*, field of the sandbanks, or ridges. Compare Achinduich, on the left bank of the river Shin.

- Achvaich—1557 Auchevayich. Possibly from G. *bathaich*, byre, but the old spelling and modern pronunciation suggest *Achadh-a-bheithich*, Birch-field.
- Achosnaich—1275 Hachencossie, which suggests *coisneadh*, service. The present form and the existence of mounds in the vicinity pointing to a battle of the old days, suggest *Achadh a' Chosnaidh*, Field of Warfare, as the likely derivation.
- Achormlary—1557 Auchegormalaye, 1746 Achgormlary. May be, as has been suggested, from *achadh*, field; *gorm*, blue; *lar*, soil—*i.e.* Field of the blue or peaty soil. But the reference is more likely to the old ruins of a very ancient dwelling on the croft, and the derivation then would be *gorm*, green, and *laraigh*, old gen. of *larach*, site—*i.e.* The Field of the Green Stance.
- Achvandra—1525 Auchandro, 1529 Hauchandrow, *i.e.* Andrew's Field. In 1510 James IV. granted to Andrew Kynnard the dues of Skelbo, which included Achvandra.
- Achlusti—G. *achadh*, field, and *loiste*, *i.e.* Field of the *Losaid*, kneading-trough. Prof. Watson says that *losaid* is often applied to fertile fields. It was situated in the neighbourhood of Skibo.
- Achteduaig—Occurs in the Session Records of 1731. Above Dalnamain, to the East. It may be *Ach-tigh-Dubhaig*, Field of Duffy's House.
- Achiniel—1735 Achuhinal. Its exposed, storm-swept situation suggests *achadh* and *sianail*, stormy, but *teannal*, a beacon, or *tionail*, act of gathering, may be more probable.
- Achlaick—Appears in Session Records of 1736, where a husband and wife are charged with beating each other, especially on the Sabbath. It is said to have been near Pitgrudy. G. *lice*, gen. of *leac*, declivity, suits the situation.
- Achvannarich—Name occurs in the Session Records of 1736 in connection with a charge against "Annie Maclean, spouse to James Harper, of drinking with her son-in-law, miller at Evelicks, and his wife on the Sabbath in Proncynain, and stealing from the house two sheaves of

- barley, some lint, and a table napkin." The Dairy-  
maid's Field—*G. banarach*, dairymaid.
- Acharnaig—In Strath Carnaig. Probably so called from the  
prehistoric cairns that abound there. *G. carn*, cairn.
- Achuan—*G. uaine*, green. There are traces of an old culti-  
vation. "Greenfield" is descriptive. It may be  
*Achadh (nan) Uan*, *i.e.* Lambs' Field. *G. uan*, lamb.
- Achnacloich—Is said to have been between Pitgrudy and  
Proncy. *G. clach*, stone: Stonefield. There is no trace  
of the "*Clach*" that gave the name, and there is no  
tradition regarding it. Possibly descriptive of the soil.
- Achlach—Occurs in the list of poor in the Session Records of  
18th century. It is below Ardallie, and is a favourite  
haunt of wild duck; hence probably its name. *G. lach*,  
wild duck.
- Ardallie—1557 Ardellis, 1723 Ardalies. *G. ard*, height, and  
*aillidh*, beautiful. Ardellis is an English plural. The  
name is descriptive of this fair ridge below Skibo.
- Ardshave—*Ard*, height, and *seimh*, peaceful. Descriptive of  
its sheltered situation on a rising ground near Balvraid  
School.
- Ardachy—*Ard*, high, and *achadh*, field: Highfield. It was  
above Fliuchary, and was broken up and absorbed in the  
adjoining crofts.
- Achloch—Lochfield. It appears to have been in the vicinity  
of Achley.
- Ardnacailc—On the sea-shore to the S.W. of Cuthill. *Ard*,  
height, and *cailc*, chalk or lime. It is largely composed  
of shell sand.
- Achanecolas—*Achadh* and *eaglais*, church: Churchfield. It  
appears to have been in the neighbourhood of Achvaich.
- Altantagairt—*Allt*, burn, and *sagairt*, gen. of *sagart*, priest.  
Its proximity to Achanecolas suggests the possibility of  
a small chapel having at one time been in this neighbour-  
hood in connection with the early Celtic Church.
- Amail—Creag Amail near Torboll is said to be derived from  
*G. amail*, hindrance—*i.e.* the "Rock of Hindrance,"  
the supposed reference being to the fact that prior to the

construction of The Mound the tides rose up several feet against this rock.

Astle—Old forms are Askesdale, Hasquesdale, 1275; Assestal, 1360; Askadaile, 1472; Austerdaill, 1525; Assidail, 1560; Askisdaill, 1566; Assiedall, 1616; Aissdill, 1655; Asdale, 1739. Several Norse derivations have been suggested, *e.g.* *ass*, rocky ridge, or *asks*, ash, and *dalr*, dale. Prof. Watson considers Askr's Dale to be the most likely.

Balloan—G. *baile*, town, and *lon*, meadow or marsh.

Balvraid—Old forms are Balnobraid, 1525; Balbrade, 1536; Balnabrayt, 1551; Ballewrat, 1560; Ballwraat, 1562; In Session Records of 1724 John Mackay in Ballivraid is said to have been found guilty of dancing at lykewakes. G. *baile* and *braghad*, gen. of *braigh*, upper land.

Balblair—Session Records of 1717 describe the wife of David Brog in Balblair as washing clothes at the waterside, which supports the idea that it was in the vicinity of Skelbo. *Baile* and *blar*, a moor.

Balachnuic—*Baile* and gen. of *cnoc*, hill. The East part of Hilton of Embo, which was assigned to the Archdeacon.

Balnappollag—*Baile* and *pollag*, little pool. Old Gaelic name for Proncynain.

Badininish—*Bad*, a clump of trees or shrubs, and *innis*, pasture.

Boggan—N.W. of Rearquhar. G. *bogan*, a quagmire. There is marshy ground there.

Blarnacoine—*Blar*, a moor, and *con*, gen. plural of *cu*, dog. Blar nan Con, Moor of the Dogs, and was probably—like Loch na Con—in the vicinity of the Little Ferry.

Brae—G. *Braigh*, the higher land.

Birichen—Various derivations have been suggested. In G. it is *na Bioraichean*. *Bior*, spit or point (of land), or O.G. *bior*, water, streamlet, are both possible explanations. Another, suggested locally, is given as of interest. It derives the name from *berichen*, the local name given to sheep with pointed heads, that, according to tradition, used to be brought there to graze. The old name in use among the natives was, I understand, *Na*



- Firichean*, i.e. the high lands. These were used for grazing by the crofters below.
- Camore—*Cadha*, a narrow pass; *mor*, big.
- Cambusmore—*Clamus*, bay, and *mor*, big: The Big Bay.
- Cambusavie—*Clamus*, bay, and *samhadh*, sorrel: the Bay of Sorrel. Old forms:—1525 Cammus-saffe; 1536 Cambusaffe; 1551 Cambus-sauwe; 1560 Cambusawye.
- Carn Liath—Grey Cairn. *G. liath*, grey.
- Clashmore—*Clais*, hollow; *mor*, big.
- Clashmugach—*Clais* and *mugach*, gloomy.
- Clashnacuinneag—*Clais* and *cuinneag*, milk pail. It is N.W. of Achormlary, and was probably a sheiling where cattle grazed in summer.
- Clashnagrave—*Clais* and *cnaimh*, gen. pl. of *cnaimh*, bone. The initial *c* of *cnaimh* becomes *g* after “*na(n)*” by eclipsis. Human remains are said to have been found in the vicinity at one time.
- Clashnabodach—*Clais* and *bodach*, old man or ghost. To the N.E. of Proncy, and believed of old to be haunted.
- Clashdow—*Clais* and *dubh*, black or gloomy. Name occurs in S.R. of 1755, where Katharine Mackay, spouse to George Fraser in Cambusavie, is charged with “scandalizing Don. Macpherson’s wife in Clashdow.” The name appears in an old charter of Skelbo, which fixes its locality.
- Clashtobarvichael—S.R. 1731. *Clais*, hollow: *tobar*, well; personal name Michael: i.e. Hollow of Michael’s Well. There seems to have been a hamlet there, near the Dornoch railway station.
- Clashnalarachean—*Clais* and *laraichean*, a site or ruin, or habitation. The earliest habitation in Birichen was here, and the name may refer to the remains of it.
- Carneith—*Carn*, rock, and *eigh*, call. It may have been the height from which the inhabitants were summoned to resist a Norse landing.
- Cnocnacroiche—*Cnoc* and *croich*, gallows: Gallows Hill. Tradition has it that in 1633 nine men were hung there at one time. The Session Records of 12th February,



1723, contain a reference to the hangman. A servant girl from Tain was ordered "to procure ane testificate under the pain of being banished the place by the hand of the hangman."

Cnocvar—"Barr's Hill," where, according to tradition, the saint retired for his private devotions.

Cnocachaisteal—Castle Hill, the highest point of the ridge above Lochantrial, where Sutherland of Evelix is said to have built a fort for protection against his enemies.

Cnocandroighinn—*Cnoc* and *droigheann*, a thorn: Thornhill. Near the links.

Cnoc na Feadaig—Plover Hill. *Cnoc* and *feadag*, a plover.

Creag Liath—*Creag*, rock, and *liath*, grey.

Croit an Easbuig—The Bishop's Croft. Now Bishopfield. *Croit*, croft, and *easbuig*, bishop.

Croitnacailliche—*Croit* and *cailleach*, nun, old woman. It lay to the west of Bishopfield.

Croitnacoilich—*Croit* and *coileach*, cock. Now known as Cockfield. A piece of land, twenty acres in extent, between Dornoch and Drumdivan, which was assigned to the Bishop's Vicar.

Croft Madoch—In the S.E. of Bishopfield, "with the Gallows hill to the north of it." Various derivations have been suggested, but none are quite satisfactory. The stress is on the first syllable.

Croftnamoine—Peat Croft. *Moine*, a moss or peats.

Croft Keil and Croft Neil—Both in the Sutherland Entail, the former to the N.W. of Dornoch (now Torranroy), fr. *caol*, narrow. Croft Neil was to the west of the Burgh.

Coul—*Cuil*, corner, or retired place.

Cuthil—Appears in a Sutherland charter of 1265 as Cutthel-Davoch. It may be "Kettill's Land." A common Norse personal name. About 890 A.D. Ketill, a famous Norse leader, settled in Scotland (Laxdale Saga). Cuthil is also found in the counties of Fife, Forfar, and Perth.

Cyderhall—1223 Siwardhoch, 1601 Sythera and Sytherow, 1733 Siddera. Tradition says that it was the residence and burial place of Sigurd Eysteinsen, a Norse leader,

who is supposed to have died there about 875 A.D. The accepted derivation is *Sigurd* and *haugr*, cairn or burial mound, *i.e.* Sigurd's Howe.

**Cuback**—1717 Cubhack; now known as Culbackie. *Cul*, back, and *bac*, bank; N. *bakki*, a ridge. Descriptive of its situation behind the ridge at Achley. A hamlet evidently stood there in the 18th century, for in 1738, according to the Session Records, Cubag produced the only possible precentor for the church.

**Craigeilisy**—*Creag*, rock, and *ailse*, fairy. It is near Loch Buidhe, and there seems to have been quite a township there long ago.

**Dalchiel**—*Dal*, dale, and *caol*, narrow. The winding of the Evelix river narrows the land here. Possibly from *caoile*, leanness, or, as suggested by a native, it may owe its name to its being a famous place for small twigs used for the making of baskets.

**Dalnamain**—*Dal* and *mein*, ore: The Ore Valley.

**Dochfin**—Davoch, G. *dabhach*, the old standard measure of land, and *fionn*, fair.

**Drumdivan**—*Druim*, ridge, and *diomhan*, idle. So called because it could not be cultivated. It was covered with trees until some years ago.

**Driemastle**—*Druim*, back, and *Astle*, *i.e.* Ridge of Asdale.

**Daleidh**—East of Astle towards the old ford at Evelix. *Eigh*, call, *i.e.* of the river, which warned people crossing that they must take the ford, is a local but rather fanciful derivation. Carneigh is also supposed to take its name from this.

**Dalvavy**—The most westerly park of the farm of Cyderhall, and so near the Evelix stream. Prof. Watson suggests *bà-mhaigh*, *i.e.* cow plain.

**Dalreidh**—*Dal* and *reidh*, level or peaceful. It is near Skibo.

**Ducatown**—Within the Skibo policies. It lay to the east of them, and was probably the site of the old dovecote. It occurs frequently in old charters.

**Dornoch**—Old forms are: c. 1136 and 1230 Durnach, 1456 Dornouch, 1568 Dornoch, 1640 Dornagh and Dornoch.

(a) *Dorn*, fist, and *eich*, gen of *each*, horse. The reference is to the tradition of a duel in the 13th century Battle of Embo between the Thane of Sutherland and the Norse leader, whom the Earl slew with a horse's leg, when he lost his sword. Hence the horse's shoe in the Burgh coat of arms. This derivation has been exploded by King David's mandate of c. 1136, in which he commends his monks at Durnach to the Earls of Orkney and Caithness. It is besides phonetically impossible.

(b) O.G. *dornach*, pebbly place, the reference being to the rounded stones of the size of a fist that abound on the links. This is the explanation given in *Place Names of Ross and Cromarty* by Prof. Watson.

Embo—Old forms are: 1223 Ethenboll, 1660 Eyndboll. Gaelic form is Erriboll, and is due to the change of *n* into *r*, which is common in Sutherland. "Indbol" appears in a decree of 1606 fixing marches between Dornoch, Proncy, and Skelbo. *Eyvind*, a Norse personal name, and *boll*: *i.e.* Eyvind's Stead. This is the most probable derivation.

Evelix—Old forms: 1222 Avelech, Awelech, Awelec; 15th century, Avelik; 16th century, Evelik and Evelick. G. *eibhleag*, a live coal, with English plural form, the reference being to the sparkling water of the river. So Prof. Watson derives, and says that the transference of "fire" terms to water is quite regular.

Eaglefield—Norse derivation suggested by the late Mr James Gray: *Egils* and *vollr*, Egils' meadow.

Ernoch—Occurs in the Sutherland Entail of 1878. G. *airne*, sloe, *i.e.* Sloe-place.

Fliuchary—G. *fliuch*, wet, and *airidh*, sheiling. Descriptive of its low-lying situation.

Febuidh—*Feithe*, bog, and *buidhe*, yellow.

Fleet—1494 Fleit. N. *fljot*, estuary or flood.

Fourpenny—Rent paid for lots of land.

Fernebuchlyn—Included in a grant of lands by Hugo Freskyn to Bishop Gilbert. In the confirmation by King William

it appears as Ferenbeuchlin. It may probably be the Ferinbeildin mentioned in the grant of these same lands to his brother Richard in 1235. An old native says that Tornabuachailin is near the Poles; probably the same place. Derived from *fearann*, land, and *buachaillean*, herds.

Gashagaich—A difficult name. A local suggestion is that it was the place where young horses were isolated in olden times, and is derived from *gaisde*, trap, and *aigeach*, young horse. Another and much more likely theory is that it owes its name to the curious reeds that are plentiful there, indicating the poverty of the soil. *G. gaiseag*, tuft of grass or reeds.

Gizzen-briggs—N. *gisnar*, leaky, and *brygga*, bridge. Tradition says that the fairies built it of sand. In Easter Ross "gizzened" is applied to tubs or barrels that have become leaky through exposure to the sun. Gaelic name is "Drochaid an Aobh," Spectres' or Water Kelpies' Bridge.

Herkhenys—"The two Herkhenys" are mentioned in Gilbert's charter. The name has disappeared, and its identification is difficult. It may be derived from N. *erg* or *arg*, sheiling or dairy farm, or Old Irish *airge*. The late Mr H. M. Mackay suggested the two Embos as the modern equivalent.

Innisaonar—*Innis* and *aonar*, the solitary pasture. Descriptive of its situation on the outskirts of Rearquhar.

Knockanlout, also, on record, Knokloft, for *cnoc* (or *cnocan*) *lobhta*, putrid hill or hillock. Here the last stand was made against the Mackays in their attack upon Dornoch in 1750. Possibly from *lot*, a wound.

Knockglass—*Cnoc*, hill, and *glas*, grey.

Kilncroft—To the N.E. of Dornoch; it once belonged to the Rev. Robert Kirk. The derivation is obvious.

Knockantoll—Appears in the S.R. of 1733. *Cnoc*, hill, and *toll*, hole; or *sabhal*, barn. It was in Rearquhar. Barnhill is the more probable.

- Leathad nan Uan—Slope of the Lambs. *G. leathad*, slope, and *uan*, lamb.
- Lonfliuch—*Lon*, meadow, and *fliuch*, wet.
- Leathad na Cloich—Slope of the stone.
- Loch nan Con—Loch of the Dogs.
- Loch a Ghiubhais—Loch of the Fir Tree. *G. giubhas*, Scotch fir.
- Lochan nan Ubhlan—Little Loch of the Apples. *G. ubhlan*, apples.
- Loch Lannsay—It has an abundance of water, and supplies Dornoch. Derivation uncertain.
- Loch Laoigh—So called from an island in it where they used to put the calves. *G. laoigh*, calves.
- Lednabirichen—*Leathad*, slope, and *birichen*.
- Lednasearmag—*Leathad* and *searmag*, clover. The transposition of *m* and *r* is uncommon. “The Clover Slope.”
- Lonemore—*Lon*, marsh or meadow, and *mor*, big. The great wet meadow.
- Londornoch—A moss above Birichen assigned to the people of Dornoch, when the mosses in the vicinity of the Burgh had been exhausted.
- Loch Ruaigidh—*G. ruagaidh*, gen. of *ruagadh*, pursuit or defeat. It is on the high ground of Dalnamain, and the adjoining tumuli suggest a fight there at some early period.
- Loch Tarvie—*Tarbh*, bull. It may have been the haunt of some legendary monster (*tarbh-uisge*), or it may take its name from Ben Tarvie, which is supposed to owe its name to its bull shape.
- Lochantrial—Derivation uncertain, but may be from *triall*, (1) an attempt, (2) a journey. Possibly from *Triath*, chief.
- Meikle Ferry—*N. mikil*. The Big Ferry, in contrast to the Little Ferry at Skelbo.
- Meall a Chaoruinn—Hill of the Mountain Ash. *G. meall*, heap or hill; *caorunn*, rowan or mountain ash.
- Meall an Eoin—Hill of the Bird. *G. eoin*, gen. sing. of *eun*, a bird. The eagle is *the bird par excellence*.

Meall Clais nam Fiadh—Hill of the Deer Hollow. G. *fiadh*, deer.

Pitgrudie—Pictish. *Pit*, O.G. *pett*, means share or portion, and as a prefix in farm names is equivalent to Gaelic *baile*, town, and *gruididh*, gravel; Norse *grjot*, stones.

Portnaculter—The old name for Meikle Ferry. *Port*, a ferry; *coltar*, a coulter. Refers to the coulter shape of the Ross-shire side.

Pollacheannaiche—*Poll*, pool, and *ceannaiche*, merchant. The bay to the west of Dornoch Point, where merchandise was landed in olden days.

Pitmayne—O.G. *pett* and *meadhon*: The Middle Town. The name occurs in several 16th century charters. It was part of Skelbo.

Proncy—A very old and difficult place name. The oldest forms that occur are:—13th century, Promci, Proinci, Promsay; 15th century, Promsy; 16th century, Pronsie, Spronsy, Prompsie. Various derivations have been suggested, but none of them are satisfactory. In Gaelic it is pronounced *Pronnsaidh*. The old castle of Pronsy stood upon a mound, and it is an interesting example of an early Norman "motte." Only the foundations now remain.

Proncynain—In Gaelic *Pronnsaidh an Fhàin*, Proncy of the flat or gentle slope, *i.e.* Lower Proncy. Proncy Croy, Hard (*cruaidh*) Proncy.

Pollachnuic—*Poll* and gen. of *enoc*, hill. Near the shore towards Embo.

Poll-a-Ghilbert—Gilbert's Pool; near Ardallie. Probably the scene of the miracle St. Gilbert is said to have wrought, when, by washing his hands in the salmon pool, a great haul of fish was landed.

Poles—The place where four roads meet, and where poles were erected to indicate whither each road led. The old Gaelic name was *Rachan* or *Rathan*. G. *rath*, an enclosure or farm building.



Rearchar—An old estate to the west of the Parish. Old forms of the name are:—13th century, Ruthenercher, Rowecherchar; 15th century, Ruryarchar; 16th century, Rowarchar; 17th century, Riarchar. *Rhi* may be from *rhi* or *ruigh*, slope, and *Fearchar*, Farquhar. His identity is unknown. In 1297 Ferquhard became Archdeacon of Caithness, and afterwards Dean, and later Bishop. Possibly he may have given the place its name. Professor Watson suggests *Ruigh an Erchoir*, O.G. for modern *urchair*, a cast or throw as of a stone or spear by some legendary hero or giant.

Ridarroch—*Ruighe*, a slope, and *darach*, gen. sing. of O.G. *dair*, an oak. It is in the neighbourhood of Rearquhar.

Rhian—Diminutive of *ruighe*, slope. It lies between Achosnich and Achormlary.

Rhistocach—*Ruighe* and *stocach*, full of stumps or roots. It is in the neighbourhood of Rearquhar.

Skelbo—1214 Scelbol, 1235 Scellebolle, 1455 Scelleboll, Skelbole; 1510 Skellebow, Skailbo, Scelbo. Norse *skel*, *shell*, or *skali*, house, or *skal*, hollow, and *boll*, place. The most likely one is *skelja* or *skel*, shell. The encroachment of the sea in olden times left a deposit of shells in the soil.

Skibo—1275 Scithaboll, Schythebolle; 1560 Skebo; 1616 Skibo. The best authorities favour Skithi's Stead, *Skithi* being a Norse personal name.

Torbold—13th century forms, Thoreboll, Thorbol; 14th cent., Thorboll, Torbull, Torball; 16th cent., Thorboll; 17th cent., Torboll. Various derivations, as *e.g.*—

(a) N. *torf*, peat, and *boll*, place (Mackay of Hereford).

(b) *Thor*, Scandinavian deity, and *boll*, *i.e.* Thor's Homestead (James Gray).

The objection to (b) is that Thor, the god's name, is most unlikely to occur in names of steads. Here, according to tradition, there lived in the 12th century a famous Norse warrior named Liot, whose ghost is said to haunt Creag Amail.

Tubbardale—Appears in the Session Records of 1734. Later on it is spelt Tubarintail. *Tobar*, well, and *saile*, gen. of *sal*, sea; *i.e.*, The Sea Well. It was on the shore to the west of Skelbo. High tides cover it. In the 18th century there must have been an alehouse there, as cases of Sabbath drinking at Tubbardale are recorded in the Session Records.

Torbuy—G. *torr*, hill, and *buidhe*, yellow or golden. Below Rosebank.

Temple Bar—The site of Barr's Church to E. of Cathedral. Occurs in S.R. of 18th century.

Tobarvichael—Name occurs in S.R., where it is also called Michaelwells. In the 18th century there must have been some dwellings there, as cases of domestic trouble came from Clashtobarvichael.

Torranroy—*Torran*, hillock, and *ruadh*, red. It was the scene of a grim fight in 1570 between the Mackays and the inhabitants of Dornoch.

Teachlyb—Occurs in a charter of 1576, and in the S.R. of 1717, where it is recorded that David Gray in Teachlyb was cited in a case against David Pharaoh in Syddera. It was to the west of Cyderhall. *Tigh*, house, and *cliob*, a silly person. Cf. Scotch *clype*, an ugly, ill-shaped fellow.

Unes—Old name of Little Ferry; 1275 Oweness, 1583 Unis, 1628 Unes. The suggested derivation from *uig*, cove; N. *vik* and *nes*, a point, is untenable. It *might* be from *uidh*, a ford, also an isthmus, but it is probably Norse.

#### OBSOLETE NAMES OF PLACES IN OR NEAR THE BURGH.

In old charters relative to the disposal of property in and round the Burgh of Dornoch place names occur that have completely disappeared. The derivation of these—in the absence of any idea of the old Gaelic pronunciation of them—is more or less a matter of conjecture, and it is very difficult.

to locate them. Though obsolete they are of interest, and worthy of preservation. An attempt is here made to interpret them and to indicate their probable locality. A number of small crofts lay to the south of the Burgh, and among these were a few whose names appear in old titles and charters.

Croftowil, which may be *Croit an t-sabhail*, i.e., Barncroft.

Croftmauld, i.e. Maud's Croft.

Gunner's Croft—These three were contiguous, and were all held in 1633 by George Ross, Pitcarry. The titles are preserved at Dunrobin.

Croft Phail—Paul's Croft, also called Croftmore, Big Croft, lay to the east of the three former.

Delvingis was the most southerly of them, and may have owed its curious name to John der Lynge, Precentor of the Cathedral in 1368.

Croft Pedde, Doin-Tronacht, Knokneecle, Welland-Croft, Negay, appear in an old charter of 1608, and are described as being all in the neighbourhood of Dornoch. They would appear to have lain to the north of the Burgh.

Negay is probably for Croft Negay, i.e. *Croit na Gaoithe*, which may mean either "croft of the wind" or "croft of the marsh."

Croft Pedde was "super Knokloft," between Doin-Kenneth (i.e. Kenneth's Hill) and Bishop's Croft.

Doin-Tronacht had Knokneecle to the west, Colme and the burn to the N.E., and Croft Pedde to the south.

Knokneecle is doubtless the Knoknaheglis in the Protocol Book, of date 1573, belonging to Wm. Gray, Notary Public, Dornoch. It is in good preservation, and is housed at Dunrobin. Church Hill, N. of the Cathedral.

Welland Croft was probably identical with Croft-Voland, whose situation is described in a Disposition of 1828 as between the high road leading from Dornoch to Achlean on the east and the high road to Balloan on the west, with the croft called Tomfad on the south, and Lochanalasat on the north.

Croft Keil lay to the N.W. of the Burgh, and had Knockanlout on the south and part of the farm of Balloan on the west. Possibly from *G. caol*, narrow.

Butte, "between the common road to Deansfield and the lands of Alex. Murray, *torrentem et fontes*."

Chamcroft—*i.e.* Crooked Croft—"between the lands of Colme and said road."

Croftknok—*i.e.* Hill Croft—was between Croft Negay, Chamcroft, Sandcroft.

Croftmcyden—Maiden Croft. It was probably to the south of the Burgh.

Barnesgen—*i.e.* *Barr an Easgain*—Eel Summit. Probably near the Dornoch Burn, which abounds in eels.

Tolme—A rounded hillock. It is described in an old deed as "part of the farm of Balloan." *G. Tolm*.

Auchekehoch—*G. cioch*, pap. To the south of Achinchanter lies a field with a small rounded hillock.

Achvonach—Probably Bannock Field. Name appears in deed of 1618. *G. bonnach*, bannock.

Croftlarie may be derived from *croit* and *laraigh*, old gen. of *larach*, site or ruin.

Loquharie—Locality and derivation unknown.

Bellcroft and the two former appear in a charter of 1618.

Doanefad was probably identical with Tomfad. *Dun*, a hillock, and *fada*, long.

Doanechouine is probably *Dun a 'huain*, Hillock of the Sea.

Lonereich appears in a charter of 1598, and lay to the north of the Burgh. It may be from *fraoch*, heather.

Canwik appears in a charter of 1586. Locality and meaning unknown.

Innoche may be a bad spelling of *innis*, pasture. It occurs in a deed of 1545 to locate "a piece of land lying between the common king's way called Innoche on the west and the bleaching green on the south." Prof. Watson suggests *G. aonach*, a market or market place.

## TRANSLATIONS OF CHARTERS

## I

Mandate by King David the First to the Earls of Orkney and Caithness to protect the monks of Dornoch.

Register of Dunfermline, p. 14, No. 23. Printed: Haddan and Stubbs II. 228. Orkney and Shetland Records I., p. 17.

1. [1127-1153] ABERNETHY.

David, King of Scots, to Reinwald, Earl of Orkney, and to the Earl<sup>1</sup> and all goodmen of Caithness and Orkney, greeting. To you I command and ordain that as ye love me ye respect and maintain the monks and their men dwelling in Dornoch in Caithness and their goods, and wherever they come among you, that you permit no one to do them harm or to insult them; witnesses, the chancellor and Herbert, the chamberlain, at Abernethy.

## II

Charter by King David I. granting Hektor Common to Andrew, Bishop of Caithness.

Register de Dumfermlyn, No. 24. Lawrie's Early Scottish Charters, 199.

[*Circa* 1150]

David, King of Scots, to all good men of his whole realm, greeting. Know ye that I have given and granted to Andrew, Bishop of Caithness, Hektor Common, free and quit from all service except in the common army; witnesses, Gregory, Bishop of Dunkeld; Earl Duncan, Gillanders of Scone, Alwyn, son of Archil: at Scone.

<sup>1</sup>Rögnvald, Earl of Orkney, 1136-1158, ruled Caithness in the name of Harald Maddadh's son, his co-regent after 1139; therefore Caithness is omitted after "and to the Earl." O. and S. Records, I., p. 18n.

## III

Charter, Hugh Freskyn to Gilbert, Archdeacon of Moray, of the lands of Skelbo, in Sutherland, and others.

The original on vellum in Dunrobin Castle. Printed: The Sutherland Book, vol. III., p. 1. [Facsimile].

[c. 1211]

To all his men and friends who shall see or hear these letters Hugh Freskyn greeting, in the Lord. Know ye all both present and to come that I have given and granted and by this my present Charter have confirmed to Mr Gilbert, archdeacon of Moray, and those heirs of his parents to whom he shall be pleased to give and grant the same, and their heirs, all my land of Skelbo in Sutherland and of Fernebuchlyn and Invershin; and further, all my land of Sutherland towards the west which lies between these lands before-named and the boundaries of Ross: To be had and held by him and his heirs aforesaid for ever of me and my heirs by their right divisions, in wood and plain, in meadows and pastures, in pools and mills, in muirs and marshes, in banks and in fishings, and in all their just pertinents, freely and quietly, fully, peacefully and honourably: Paying for the foresaid lands the service of an archer for all exaction, custom, service and demand belonging to me and my heirs, and relieving them of the forinsec service due to the king so far as pertains to the foresaid lands. And I, Hugh Freskyn, and my heirs shall warrand, acquit and defend for ever the aforesaid lands to the before-mentioned Mr Gilbert, archdeacon of Moray, and the heirs of his parents, to whom he shall give and grant the same and their heirs against all men and women for ever: these being witnesses, William, my brother; Andrew, my brother; Walter Morthach, Hugh Douglas, Freskyn Douglas, Waldeve of Garrioch; Robert, the chamberlain; Reginald, the janitor; Richard of Moray, Archibald of Duffus, Augustine of Elgin, Thomas, son of Augustine; John Black, Alexander of Elgin, and many others.



## IV

Appointment by Gilbert, Bishop of Caithness, of a  
Constitution for the Chapter of his diocese.

Original on vellum in Dunrobin Castle. Printed: The  
Sutherland Book, vol. III., p. 3. Miscellany of the Banna-  
tyne Club, vol. III., p. 17.

Two ancient Records of the Bishopric of Caithness, pp.  
17-21.

9. [1222-1245]

To all the faithful in Christ who shall see or hear this  
writing, Gilbert, by divine mercy Bishop of Caithness,  
greeting in the Lord everlasting. Whereas in the times  
before our administration there was in our cathedral church  
but one priest serving God, both on account of the poverty of  
the place and also of frequent invasions, we, desiring for the  
honour of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the most blessed Mary,  
his mother, and all saints, to amplify the divine worship  
therein, and having diligently considered the same and sought  
the advice of discreet men, have determined at our own  
expense to build the said cathedral church and consecrate the  
same to the honour of the before-mentioned Mother of God,  
as also to erect a conventual as our poverty may permit. We  
ordain therefore and provide that in the said church there  
shall be ten canons with the bishop who shall be for the time,  
and they shall vigilantly by themselves or their vicars by  
turns discharge the duties of the ministry therein, over whom  
as their head the bishop shall preside. Out of their number  
five shall be appointed dignitaries, to wit, a dean, precentor,  
chancellor, treasurer, and archdeacon, each of whom, together  
with the bishop and the Abbot of Scone, a canon appointed  
in the said church, shall find one priest to minister for him  
in the said church in his absence every day. The three  
remaining canons shall find deacons who shall diligently assist  
and serve the foresaid priests in the said church. For the  
support of four of the canons foresaid and the lighting of the  
cathedral church we have been careful to assign fourteen of  
the parish churches of our diocese, reserving six for the

episcopal use, appointing to each one his respective prebend, as follows: To the deanery the church of Clyne with its whole revenues and pertinents, the teind sheaves of the city of Dornoch and town of Embo with the fourth part of the altarage of Dornoch and the whole land of Methandurnach: to the precentorship, the church of Creich with its whole revenues, pertinents and chapels, the teind sheaves of Pronsy, Evelix, Stradormeli, Asdale and Rearquhar, the fourth part of the altarage of Dornoch, and the whole land of Huchterhinche at Dornoch; to the chancellor, the church of Rogart, with the whole revenues and pertinents, the teind sheaves of Skelbo, that is to say, of twelve davachs, and the fourth part of the altarage of Dornoch; and to the treasurer, the church of Lairg with the whole revenues and pertinents thereof, the teind sheaves of Skibo and Cyderhall (except the teinds already assigned to the precentorship at Stradormeli), belonging to the foresaid lands, and likewise the fourth part of the altarage of the church of Dornoch: there being also assigned to each of the foresaid four prebends a free toft and croft in the city of Dornoch. And in order to induce the foresaid dignitaries the more readily and easily to make their residence in the cathedral church either while occupied in the services thereof or without on the business of the bishop, we have assigned to them in common the church of Farr with its whole revenues and pertinents, except the teinds and revenues of Hallidale, which have formerly been given to the church of Reay by us on account of the proximity of the said church to Hallidale and its great distance from the church of Farr, but reserving to us power of dividing the foresaid parish of Farr into several parts on account of its scattered condition: decerning and ordaining that those who shall reside as is aforesaid shall equally participate in the revenues of the said whole church and its chapels when they make their residence there; but shall receive nothing thereof when they are absent. And because also next after the bishop these persons are the principal and chief in the cathedral church we ordain that their churches shall be free from all burden to the archdeacon, officials and rural deans, ordaining that none

of them presume to exercise any authority over their persons or households or chaplains, as their excesses shall be corrected by us and our chapter. To the archdiaconate we have assigned the churches of Bower and Watten, with their whole revenues and pertinents. Moreover we have assigned to the chancellor, the treasurership and the archdiaconate the whole land of Pitgrudy and the entire land of the two Herkhenys, to be divided among them by equal portions, with the common pasture of the said city of Dornoch. For the prebend of the Abbot of Scone we have assigned the church of Kildonan with all its revenues and pertinents, and he shall serve in the cathedral church by a priest as his vicar as above expressed, but he and his successors shall not be compelled to make residence nor to find a vicar in their prebendal church, it being provided, however, that the said church shall be served by a competent priest. For the three remaining prebends we have assigned the three parish churches of Olrig, Dunnet and Canisbay separately, and adjoined thereto the church of Skinnnet to be held in common among them, of the fruits of which they shall partake only as is above appointed and ordained with regard to the church of Farr, and if none of them shall happen to be resident, then these shall go to the maintenance and decoration of the cathedral church, there being first paid therefrom in one sum the salary of one hundred shillings to William of Rcess, our clerk, and the further salary of three marks to Eudo, our chaplain, which is assigned to them yearly to be paid in the said church, failing the aforesaid church of Skinnnet being divided for the use aforesaid in equal portions to the three canons of the church. The church of Durness we have assigned for providing light and incense to the aforesaid cathedral church; and for the support of a vicar ministering on our behalf in the said cathedral church we have consigned with the consent of our chapter the teinds of Torboll and Kinnauld and twenty acres of land at Dornoch, with a toft and croft in the said city. Further to the five prebends last above appointed and set forth tofts and crofts there are also assigned that they may have no excuse for absenting themselves. We therefore

have ordained and appointed that they shall freely and quietly enjoy the foresaid churches and their prebends, saving always our episcopal rights in the churches. Moreover by common consent of the chapter we have ordained that at least for the half of every year the dean shall remain in residence in the cathedral church, and all the other canons, whether appointed to dignities or not, except the Abbot of Scone, shall remain in residence for three months every year either together or severally unless they have leave from the bishop or chapter, without which the defaulter shall pay twelve pence weekly during his absence towards the maintenance and decoration of the cathedral church. And further we have ordained that if any canon shall be lawfully summoned by the bishop or chapter to come and give his advice and counsel for the defence of the church and shall neglect to come, he shall be deprived of his prebendal revenue until such time as he shall give suitable satisfaction unless he is able to render a canonical excuse. Likewise we have ordained and determined that each of the seven priests serving in the foresaid cathedral church shall every day celebrate divine service unless he is canonically prevented, and that both the foresaid priests and the deacons shall be present at every hour each day unless any of them shall happen to be absent from sickness or by leave of the bishop if he be present or of the dean; but whoever shall otherwise absent himself shall be punished according to the manner thereof to be instituted in the foresaid church. To all the canons and vicars therefore of the foresaid church serving God therein and observing the laws thereof, be the peace and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ so that they may partake of the fruit of their good action here and at the last judgment obtain the rewards of eternal peace; but upon those who shall distract and injure them let the wrath and indignation of Almighty God be theirs in eternal damnation. And that the whole premises may remain firm and immovable and be of perpetual force and vigour we have subscribed this page of our ordinance and constitution with our own hand and in indubitable testimony thereof have caused append our seal together with the seal

of our chapter; praying that what our discretion, such as it is, has appointed the elevation of our successors will not presume to annul; as to which that it may be still more evident to posterity each of our canons have strengthened the same by their subscription; the chapter being witness.

## V

Charter by King Alexander the Second confirming the  
Gift by Gilbert, Bishop of Caithness, to his  
brother Richard of the lands of Skelbo, &c.

Original on vellum in Dunrobin Castle. Printed: The  
Sutherland Book, vol. III., p. 6. [Facsimile].

December 26, 1235.

ST ANDREWS.

Alexander, by the grace of God, King of Scots, to all good men of his whole realm, greeting. Know ye both present and to come that we have granted and by this our Charter have confirmed that donation which Gilbert, Bishop of Caithness, made to Richard, his brother, of his whole land of Sutherland which Hugh Freskyn gave to the said bishop, namely, the whole land of Skelbo, and Ferinbeildin, and besides the whole land which lies between the said lands of Skelbo and Ferinbeildin and the boundaries of Ross towards the west: To be held by the said Richard and his heirs of the heirs of the foresaid Hugh Freskyn in fee and heritage by their right meiths and with all their just pertinents, as freely and quietly, fully and honourably, conform to the fuller Charter made thereupon by the said Bishop Gilbert to the foresaid Richard, and the Charter of the before-named Hugh Freskyn and confirmation thereof by the lord King William, our father, to the foresaid Bishop Gilbert of these lands at fuller length, in which they are justly set forth and confirmed, saving our service; witnesses, William, Bishop of Glasgow, chancellor; Patrick, Earl of Dunbar; Walter, son of Alan Stewart, justiciar of Scotland; Walter Olifard, justiciar of Lothian; Alan Durward, Walter Bysset, and William of Mar. At St. Andrews, 26th December, in the 22nd year of the king's reign [1235].



## VI

Agreement between Archibald, Bishop of Caithness, and William, Earl of Sutherland, in regard to the Castle of Skibo, and other lands.

Original on vellum in Dunrobin Castle. Printed: The Sutherland Book, vol. III., p. 7. Facsimile. Miscellany of the Bannatyne Club, vol. III., p. 21. Two Records of the Bishopric of Caithness.

September 22, 1275.

DORNOCH.

To all the sons of holy mother church who shall see or hear this writing, Archibald, by divine mercy Bishop of Caithness, eternal greeting in the Lord. Whereas of late a controversy had arisen between the venerable fathers, our predecessors, Gilbert, William and Walter, of good memory, Bishops of Caithness, on behalf of the said church on the one part, and the noble men, William, of famous memory, and William, his son, Earls of Sutherland, with reference to the Castle of Skibo and certain other lands, namely, the six davachs of Skibo, and six davachs of Cyderhall with the passage, the two and a half davachs of land of Migdale, Swordale and Creich, with the fishing of the Bonar, of Cuthil, the two davachs of Monimor, the two davachs of Evelix, the three davachs of Proncy, the one davach of Rearquhar, the three-quarters of Asdale, the half davach of Achosnich, the three davachs of Torbell, the two davachs of Kinnauld, and the four davachs of Lairg, which lands and castle our said predecessors claimed to belong to the church of Caithness by right from the earls foresaid; and this controversy has gone on for long, not without grave cost to the church of Caithness and much expense to the said earls, and has come down to our time and that of William, the son of the foresaid earl of famous memory, at length faithful men and eager for peace, being prelates of the church and noblemen, both earls and barons, and not a few others of good name, compassionating the burdens and anxieties of the church of Caithness and the labours and outlays of the fore-



said earls, interposed their earnest efforts with the zeal of disinterested friendship so that peace and unity might be restored and perpetually established between the church of Caithness, us and our successors and the foresaid noble Earl William, and his heirs. In the end, after many meetings and discussions, the said earl, moved by the counsel of the said prelates, nobles and other worthy men, of his own free will granted to the church of Caithness and to us and our successors the Castle of Skibo with the six davachs of land adjoining, the six davachs of Cyderhall with the passage, the two and a half davachs of Migdale, Swordale, and Creich, with the fishing of the Bonar, and the two davachs of Monimor, with their pertinents: To be had and held and peacefully possessed in all time coming by the church of Caithness, us and our successors, saving the forinsec service due to the King, without any controversy to be raised hereafter by the said earl or his heirs; but the remaining lands, that is to say, the two davachs of Evelix, the three davachs of Pronsy, the one davach of Rearquhar, the three-quarters of Asdale, the half davach of Achosnich, the three davachs of Torboll, the two davachs of Kinnauld, the four davachs of Laing, and the one davach of Cuthil shall, with our free will and consent of our chapter, remain with the said earl and his heirs in all time coming, fully, heritably, and peacefully without any molestation or opposition to be made by us or our successors. And further that this provision to our church, us and our successors may be more secure, and that we may be able to obtain full possession of the said lands granted to our church, us and our successors by the said earl, and for the help and benefit conferred upon us and our successors by the said earl, we of our free will and with the consent of our chapter have given and granted to the foresaid earl and his heirs one davach of Unes to the value of half a merk, and that the said earl and his heirs may present to us and our successors who shall be for the time one chaplain who in all time coming shall say mass at the altar of St. James in the church of Dornoch for the souls of the said earl and his predecessors and successors; which chaplain on the

presentation of the foresaid earl and his heirs, we shall admit, and shall assign to the said chaplain for his support five merks annually from the episcopal revenues, viz., from our fines of our town of Dornoch by the hands of the bailies of us and our successors who shall be for the time at the two yearly terms, viz., at the feast of Martinmas in winter two and a half merks, and at the feast of Whitsunday, two and a half merks, in all time coming. We also promise of our own free will and with the consent of our chapter that we shall provide and make all security for the inviolable observance in all time coming of those concessions to the said earl and his heirs which he and his council may desire and can lawfully seek and ordain. And for the inviolable observance of this ordinance or agreement in all time coming in all and by all as is above written, both we for ourselves and our successors, and the dean, archdeacon, precentor, and chancellor for themselves and the chapter of Caithness, and the said earl for himself and his heirs have given their bodily oath. In witness whereof and for the greater security of this agreement our seal, together with the common seal of the chapter of Caithness and the seals of the dean, archdeacon, precentor, and chancellor of Caithness, are appended to this writing, which is to remain with the earl and his heirs; and to a similar writing which is to remain with us and our successors and our chapter, the seals of the said earl, together with the seals of Sir William of Mowat, Sir Andrew of Moray, Sir Alexander of Moray, and Sir David of Inverlunan, are appended. Done in the cathedral church of Caithness, 22nd September, 1275.

## VII

Mandate by King Edward I. of England to the Keeper of Darnaway Forest, to supply oak trees to the Bishop of Caithness.

October 26, 1291.

The King and over lord of the Kingdom of Scotland to his beloved and faithful Alexander Comyn, Keeper of the

Forest of Darnaway in Moray, greeting. Whereas we have given for the souls of blessed memory of Alexander,<sup>1</sup> sometime King of the Scots, lately deceased, and Margaret, sometime Queen of the said Kingdom, his consort and our sister, to the venerable father A.,<sup>2</sup> Bishop of Caithness, chancellor of Scotland, as a mourning gift, forty fit oaks for the fabric of his cathedral church of Caithness, we command you to let the foresaid bishop have these forty oaks for the fabric of his foresaid church from the foresaid forest. In witness whereof, &c. Attested by the King at Bergavenny, 26th October.

[Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. I., p. 6a].

### VIII

Charter by William, fifth Earl of Sutherland, to  
Nicolas Sutherland, his brother, of the barony of  
Torboll.

Printed in "The Sutherland Book," vol. III., p. 18.

September 13, 1360.

ABERDEEN.

To all who shall see or hear this charter William, Earl of Sutherland, greeting in the Lord everlasting. Know ye all that we have given and granted and by this our present charter have confirmed to our beloved brother, Nicholas of Sutherland, for his faithful homage and service rendered and to be rendered to us, the sixteen davachs of land lying within the earldom of Sutherland in the free barony, which is called Torboll, namely, the three davachs of Torboll, one davach of Rearquhar, one davach of Astle, one davach of Over Proncy, one davach of Nether Proncy, and one davach of Proncy Croy, two davachs of Evelix, one davach of Grodybrorak, one davach of Sciberscross, one davach of Kilpheder greater and less, with the quarter of Meyngferri, one davach of Caen lying on the east side of the Water of Strathulli, and one

<sup>1</sup> Alexander III. married Margaret, eldest daughter of Henry III., who died in February, 1274-5.

<sup>2</sup> Alan of St. Edmund, who was appointed Chancellor of Scotland by Edward I.

davach of Kilpheder lying on the west side of that water: To be held and possessed by the foresaid Nicholas and his heirs lawfully begotten and to be begotten of his body of us and our heirs purely and perpetually in free barony, in muirs, marshes, woods, plains, pastures, meadows, pathways, roads, fishings, huntings and fowlings, in pools and waters, turferies and peateries, mills, smithies and maltkilns, with sok and sak, tholl and them, pit and gallows, infangthief and all other commodities, courts, pleas and complaints and with the natives of the said land, and with all liberties, commodities and easements belonging to the said barony of Torboll or able to belong thereto, as well not named as named, both under the earth and above, by any manner of way in time coming: Paying therefore to us and our heirs the foresaid Nicholas and his heirs the service of one knight yearly for all other service, exaction or demand whatsoever. And we the foresaid William and our heirs shall warrand, acquit, and for ever defend the foresaid barony of Torboll with its pertinents, liberties and easements to the foresaid Nicholas and his heirs against all men and women. In witness whereof our seal is appended to this present charter, dated at Aberdeen, 3rd September, 1360, before these witnesses, the venerable fathers in Christ, John, by the grace of God, Bishop of Moray, and Thomas, Bishop of Caithness, Thomas of Moray, panetarius of Scotland, and many others.

## IX

At Edinburgh, 6th August, 1608, the King confirms a charter of Alexander, Bishop of Caithness, ratifying all charters of George Murray, of Spanzieddill, and his predecessors and now giving to said George and his heirs certain lands and tenements within the burgh of Dornoch, viz.—Croft Pedde above Knokloft (between the lands of Doin-Kenneth and the Bishop's croft), the croft which is called Kilcroft (between the croft of David Mody and Doinkenneth, the sea shore and the tenement of the said croft), the croft which is called Butte (between the common road to Deans-

field, the land of Alex. Murray, the burn and springs), the croft which is called Chamcroft (between the croft of Mr Jo. Poilsone, Chantor of Caithness, the lands of Colme and said road), the riggs called Doin-Tronacht (Knokneecle on the west, Colme and the burn on the north-east, and Croft-Fedde on the south), the croft which is called Velland croft (between the said road, the croft of St. Fynbarr, the croft of Dinnett, the croft of Criste Poilsone, the croft of David Mody, Knokneecle and the head towards Doinfade), the croft which is called Croftknok (between Croft Negay, Chamcroft, Sandcroft and the croft of Donald Makgillimoir), the tenement adjacent to the burn of the town of Dornoch (to the west of the said Croft Negay near the tenement of the lord of Fors, containing  $1\frac{1}{2}$  roods), the tenement near the legal cross and the cemetery to the north of the cross (containing 1 rood), the tenement to the north of the church of S. Fynbarr towards the east near the burn, with its garden behind. To be held of the said bishop, just as any burgess within Scotland held any freehold.

Witnesses:—M. Jac. Strathanein, Rob. Moncur (servants of said bishop), Duncan Dundas, Merchant, Thomas Innes, servant of said George.

The charter is dated, At Letham, 3 Aug., 1608, and was written by Geo. Monro, junior, in Edinburgh.—[Reg. Mag. Sig., Vol. VI, No. 2141].

## X

At Edinburgh, 30th Sept., 1608, the King confirmed the charter of Alexander, Bishop of Caithness, by which he disposed and quitclaimed to John, Earl of Sutherland, certain lands in Caithness and Sutherland, including the following:—Skibo Mains with the pendicles called Braemortie, lie Easter part of Skibo Dowcatland, the dovecot and alehouse of the same, the mill of Skibo with its lands and alehouses, the city and town of Dornoch with its houses, tofts, acres, “lie riggis, assyse-aill et thole ejusdem,” the Bishop’s ward, the lands called Ernoch with the mosses called



the Bishop's moss and others situated in the said episcopate, with the mill of Dornoch, the mill crofts etc. of the said town . . . . the office of hereditary constable of Skibo, Scrabster and Dornoch and bailieship of all lands of the said bishopric, with the power of constructing the water or wind-mills on any part of the town of Dornoch or the burn of the same. Besides, because the said castles and palace are situated in a northern province where fierce men roam about frequently, where not only in time of war, but also in time of peace they cannot be guarded without very heavy expense, he grants to the said John the said offices with "lie porter-gopiness" that was wont to be paid to the janitor of Scrabster.—[Reg. Mag. Sig., Vol. VI, No. 2155].

## XI

At Holyroodhouse, 6th March, 1627, the King confirms the charter of John, Bishop of Caithness, by which he confirmed to John, Earl of Sutherland, and his heirs male of the surname and arms of Gordon certain lands in Caithness and Sutherland, including the city and town of Dornoch with houses ("lie aikeris riggis assyiss-aill et tholl consuetis"), care of the Bishop's mosses and the rest of the mosses situated in the said episcopate . . . . and with the power of constructing mills, "lie water seu wynd-mylnes," on any part of the town of Dornoch or its burn . . . . For the custody of the palace of Dornoch, which castle and palace would be maintained at the expense of the said bishop for his reception of the said bishop, as often as he might wish to remain there at his own expense; but if the said earl should build these anew without the consent of the said bishop, that would be done at the expense of the said earl.

Witnesses:—Rob. Monro, Commissary of Caithness; Jo. Scott, servant of the said bishop; M. Rob. Paip (writer of the charter). Edinr., 7 Mar., 1626.

[Reg. Mag. Sig., Vol. VIII, No. 1045].



## XII

A.D. 1478.

At Edinburgh, 9th Nov., the King confirmed a charter of William, Bishop of Caithness, by which, with consent of his dean and chapter and of the King, he appoints his brother-german Gilbert Mudy to the custody and government of his castles of Scrabster and Skibo (Skeboll) renewed (reformatorum) for the defence of his church and church lands, both in Caithness and in Sutherland, and of the lands adjacent thereto, on account of the custody of which castles to be done at the charge and expense of the said church, he granted to the said Gilbert for his service as if in feu farm for himself and his two heirs of his body lawfully begotten the 10 merk lands in Caithness, to be held by the said Gilbert and his two heirs of his body from the said bishopric in feu and without arage and cariage (sine averagio et cariagio). In witness whereof—sealed by the round and the common seal of the chapter of Caithness, and with the signatures of the canons, viz.:—Pat. Fraser, Joh. Kenniti, precentor, Tho. Quhit, Chancellor of Caithness, Will. Tullach, Treasurer, Alex. Sutherland, Archdeacon, Magnus Burge, rector, Rob. Rattre, rector of Dunnett, Iac. Kynnarde, rector of Canisbay, “et Sorleti, rectoris de Assand.”

At Dornoch, in the place of its chapter (chapter-house), 18th Sept., 1455.

[Reg. Mag. Sig., II., 1404].

*Note.*—*Arage* and *cariage* were synonymous terms, and signified the servitude due by tenants in men and horses to their landlord.

## PAIP STONE

I am indebted, through the kindness of Mr G. G. Napier, to Mr John Reoch, F.S.A. Scot., for the following heraldic description of the coat-of-arms on the above stone:—

Parted per pale, on the dexter side a rose between three boars' heads erased; on the sinister a chevron between three cross crosslets, fitchée issuing out of as many crescents.”

## THE SEALS OF THE CHAPTER

The illustration of the common seal of the Chapter on p. 199 shows that it was of an oval shape, and that it bore the inscription:—"S. CAPITULI ECCLESIE SANCTE DEI GENITRICIS MARIE CATANENSIS." In the centre of the seal, within a niche, is a demi-figure of the Virgin with a royal crown and nimbus. She is holding in her left arm the infant Saviour, in whose left hand there is a book. At the right side of the Virgin is the head of a bishop, and at the left side a head with a crown. It has been suggested that they may represent the heads of St. Columba and King David. Above these are the heads of angels, and in three small recesses above the niche are the heads of saints. In the lower part of the seal stands a group of nine men clad in ecclesiastical vestments, who probably represent the chapter. The Abbot of Scone, though a canon, was not resident. The counter seal is reproduced on p. 147. The scene it depicts is the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel has in his left hand a scroll on which is inscribed "Ave Maria." In a recess above, the Holy Ghost is represented as descending in the form of a dove. The inscription, as deciphered by Mr Cosmo Innes, is:—"Collegium: consigno: meum: Catanense: Mariæ."

Bishop Mudy's charter to his brother Gilbert, drawn up at Dornoch on Sept. 18th, 1455, bears that it was sealed by "the round and the common seal of the chapter of Caithness," which suggests that there was another seal of a circular shape. No information regarding this seal is available.

## EXTRACTS FROM REG. SEC. SIG. (1506-7)

No. 1351. "At Edinburgh, 2 Nov. A Lettre maid to Andra Bischof of Caithnes, makand hym chawmerlane and capitane of the landis and lordschippis of Ross and Ardmannach, and als capitane of the castellis of Dyngwell in Ross and Redcastell in Ardmannach—To endure for ix zeris. . . . [III., 82].

In 1507 he was commissioned, along with others, "to call the burgess inhabitantis the communitais of Dyngwell, Tane, and all utheris fretenentis and inhabitantis the lorchippis of Dyngwell and Ardmannach and to see thair infetmentis, and gif any of thaim occupies and usurpis ony part of the kingis propier lands, sic as moss or woddis forthir than thair infetmentis beirs, to note thaim," and send copies of their infetments to the King, "that they may be punyst herefoir." He was appointed Treasurer of Scotland in 1510. He was given a tack of the fishings of Conon and all others pertaining to the King in the lordships of Ross and Ardmannach, "Payand thairfoir zerely four last of salmond, full, rede, and suete, and twa thousand keling fre on the schore of Leith, the kingis grace berand the aventure thairof fra Dignwell to Leith and als payand the fraucht of the sammyn." . . . [III, 107].

The Reg. Sec. Sig., IV, 193, has this entry under date 26th Feb. (1511-2):—"Preceptum Legitimationis Andrea, Episcopi Cathanensis, et Georgei Stewart, archidiaconi Cathanensis, ejus fratris." Another precept of 10th August, admits Andrew, Bishop of Caithness, Treasurer, to the temporalities of Kelso.

Reg. Sec. Sig., IV, 70 (1509-10): "A Lettre maid to Andro Kynnard of that ilk, ane of the fre tenentis of the erledome of Sutherland, of the gift of the males, profitis and dewiteis of his landis of Skelebow liand within the said erledome, ay and quhill the entre of the richtius aire to the sammyn. . . ."

An entry dated "At Edin., 24 Mar., 1537-8" (XI, 56), reads thus:—"Ane Lettre maid to Henry Kempt of Thomas-toun, his airis and assignais, ane or mair, of the gift of the warde and nonentres of the landis of Sprounsie, with thare pertinentis, liand in the barony of and pertanyning to our soverane lord be reasoun of warde be deces of unquhill . . . Erle of Sutherland."

Reg. Sec. Sig., IX, 16:—"Ane Lettre maid to James, Erle of Murray, and his assignais of the gift of all and sindry the cornis, catale, hors, scheip, nolt, takis, stedingis and all uthir gudis movabill and unmovable" that belonged to those responsible for "the slauchtir of William Sutherland of Duffus."

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### FORFEITED ESTATES' PAPERS *RE* LORD DUFFUS OF SKELBO

Claim for balance of account for coals and wood supplied by Thomas Taubman, Woodmonger, of Durham Yard, in the county of Middlesex, of date 10th August, 1717.

Claim by James Thomson, one of the Bailies of Inverness, Merchant, upon the estates of Kenneth, late Lord Duffus, and Sir John Mackenzie, late of Coul, for payment of a bond dated ye j Oct., 1705.

Claim of James Sutherland, younger of Pronsie, for payment of money borrowed by Kenneth, late Lord Duffus. June 17th, 1717.

Claim of James Sutherland of Evelicks against the possession to be taken of the Town and Lands of Nether and Over Evelicks with the Miln lands, Multures, and Sequals of the same, together with town and lands of Pronsie Nayne and Pronsie Roy, with the Teind Sheaves of all and sundry, the Lands, Alehouses and Alehouse Crofts of the same formerly a part of the State of Duffus, by the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates, on the ground that by contract between the then Lord Duffus and Patrick Dunbar of Sideray of date 2nd April, 1655, the said Lord Duffus for the sum of 10000 merks advanced to him by the said Patrick Dunbar disposed to him, his heirs male and assignees whatsoever all the foresaid lands in which the claimant and his authors have ever since the contract been in possession, Lord Duffus only having a power of redemption. [Original in Register House, Edinburgh].

## TENANTS ON THE SKELBO ESTATE IN 1718

- Pronsie—James Sutherland—900 merks Scots.  
 Evelicks—James Sutherland—720 do.  
 Rearquhar—John Sutherland—450 do.  
 Breagrudie, etc.—Alexander Sutherland—£425 16s 8d Scots.  
 Meikle Torboll—Hugh Sutherland—300 merks Scots.  
 Coul—William Sutherland, Donald Murray, and John  
 McIntosh—4 bolls bear and 9/- Stg.  
 Easter Skelbo—George Murray—4 bolls bear and 3 merks  
 Scots.  
 Cambusavie—David Sutherland.  
 Knockglass—John Munro, Wm. Mackay, John Macintosh,  
 Alex. Mathewson.  
 Achandrew—John Mcalea, Donald McKay, Thomas Matthew-  
 son, Alex. Mcalea, James Mackay, John Mackay.  
 Balvraid—John and Donald Mackay, John Harp, John  
 Sutherland.

William Macintosh, officer of Skelbo, depones he has a possession of the lands of Skelbo of yearly value of Two Bolls Bear allowed him for his service as officer to the Barony of Skelbo, and that there is waste in the Barrony of Skelbo beside a halfpenny land to the value of Two Bolls and Six Shillings Sterling, Threepenny lands with 12 bolls bear and 27 merks Scots yearly.

## COPY OF LETTER

*Elizabeth, Lady Duffus, to William, 16th Earl of Sutherland,  
 April 2nd, 1747.*

My Lord,—I tak this oportunity of condoling with your lordship upon the litt melincholy misfurtun in your lordship's family. Howiver, I hop reson and prudenc will direct you to bear it with that submision due the great Disposar and Derectar of all things. Carall communicatt to me your lordships inclinations as to Lidy Betty. You may be sure she is as welcome to me as she ware my own, and accordingly I went directely to Donrobin in order to see the child and



bring her heer. Howiver, the weather was bad, and the child insisted on staying till the burryal was over, which I consented to and went and waitted of her that day myself. After that she shewed a great aversion to leave Donrobin. Howiver, I imputed that to idle people who put it in her head, who wanted there should be a pretenc of a family kept up. This subject I will not insist on. Howiver, I made the child easy, and brought her heer with a very fine day, and she has the best roun in my hous; her woman, Baby, is with her to derect her dyett. Bett's very much att her devotion to devert her; in short, my lord, ivery thing in my powr to acomadate her. But I'm rely sorry to tell your lordchip I do not think her in a right state of health, nor by what I can understand has she been sinc she had the meszels. She has a bad cough, briths short, is very thin, and has littel or no apeteett; besaids this the smal pox is raiging in the contry, and your lordship knows we have no phisition or surgon in the contry. Now, as thos things is best takin in time, I thought it dutty therfor to litt your lordship know them, that you might judge what was proper from time to time to advise me off; I have wrot fully this post to Lady Strathnever, so lives it to your lordship and her to judge whither you think the contry in this satuation proper for her not. The child still shew anktiety to be att Donrobin, but that I cannot think off, as she can have no asistains ther but what I can give her, and the children with compienie is a diversion. She is getting spermacety, hysop water, siveral other inocent things; and be asur'd ware she my only child I woud not be more carful or anktious about her. She begs to be remember'd to your lordship, and it will give me great pleasure to be able to give your lordship better accounts of the dear child, as I woud willingly hop the warm wether will recrute her, and a tender turn of this kind is very uswill efter the meszells; but people can not be too foruward in using meens to prevent the worst. Lady Betty woud be fond to have a lin from your lordship, which pleas inclos to me; it will rouse her littel spiritts and incouege her to be blaith and seeeisfyd. She is very fond of me, and it is my great study to make her



so. Lord Duffus begs to be kindly remembered to your lordship. He has attained clos att Dunrobin sinc your orders come, and saw the countes interment gon about as near your derection as possible. Fridy last was the day, and he bid Carrol writt your lordship as full as posible, and he wowd writt him self nixt post. We should be glade to hear of your lordship having thoughts of returning home. Betts insists on offering her compliments, and I beg your lordship will belive me to be, my lord, your lordships most obideant humble servant,

ELIZA DUFFUS.

Skelbo, 2nd Apral 1747.

*Notes:—*

(1) The Earl was in Bath taking the cure at the time of the death of his wife, who had not been in good health for some time, but her end came rather unexpectedly.

(2) Lady Betty, after her mother's death, was brought up by her grandmother, Lady Strathnaver, in Edinburgh. She married in 1757 her cousin, the Hon. James Wemyss of Wemyss. She died at Edinburgh in 1803, and was buried in Holyrood Abbey beside her brother.

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### EMBO INVOCATION AT THE BLESSING OF THE NETS

The Gaelic invocation used by the people of Embo at the blessing of the nets, and given to me by the Rev. A. B. Scott, as he got it from the late Dr Grant, was as follows:—

“ o'n ear at iar  
beannaicht an lin 'ionapar;  
beannaicht an long  
beannaicheadh Dia an t-Athair.”

It has been submitted to Professor W. J. Watson, who is inclined to regard it as a fragment of a more lengthy invocation. He suggests this as the probable reading:—

O'n fhear ud iar (or shiar)  
Beannaich an lìon, a Fhion(n)bar;  
Beannaich an long;  
Beannaicheadh Dia an t-Athair.

He also suggests that the original wording, of which the above is a corrupted version, might run somewhat as follows:—

O'n fhear ud iar  
Beannaich an lìon, a Bhairr;  
Beannaich an long,  
Beannaich, a Dhia Athair.

The translation would then be:—

From that one behind (*i.e.*, the Evil One)  
Bless the net, thou Barr;  
Bless the vessel,  
Bless Thou it, God the Father.

Professor Watson adds that “am fear ud” is a common and wide-spread euphemism for the Evil One, *e.g.*, “a mhic an fhir ud!” “thou son of the Evil One!” He quotes Rob Donn’s words: “Am fear ud calg tha oirr’ de mhuing” —*i.e.*, An donas calg, &c.—“The devil a bristle has she of a mane.” “Am fear ud iar” (or “siar”) has reference to the command, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” The absence of aspiration in (*F*)*ionapar* of Dr Grant’s version, which if handed down by continuous tradition would have been *Fionnbharr*, indicates that this form of the saint’s name in the invocation was introduced at a fairly late period.

#### EXTRACT

from *Old Ross-shire and Scotland*, by W. MCGILL.

Document No. 205, A.D. 1731

“Complaint Unto . . . the Sheriff . . . of Sutherland, Alex<sup>r</sup>. Sutherland messenger-at-arms . . . That, being employed to execute letters of caption at the instance of Hugh Sutherland sometime chirurgion apothecary in Dornoch now in . . . Kirkwall . . . against Andrew Macculloch late baillie now thesaurer of Dornoch for payment of three pounds sterling . . . with foresaid letters . . . in

my hand and blazon displayed on my breast I addrest . . . and after touching him with my wand of peace told him he was my prisoner . . . notwithstanding whereof and in open contempt . . . Andrew Macculloch having a ponderous Iron Key . . . of the Tolbooth . . . of Dornoch . . . bid me go and kiss the King . . . and wipe . . . with the Caption and with . . . key struck me over the head and face . . . assisted by John Mackay by the hair of my head forced me to the ground . . . and kicking me . . . Having the blood washit off . . . I went with a reasonable concurrence [force] to the house of the said Andrew . . . was mett in the entry by him and he at the same time unsheathed "

*Note by the Compiler*

"[Paper torn off, and story ends, like a penny number, at the exciting point. If the bellicose bailie, in spite of the claymore, or dirk, he unsheathed, was locked up with the key that he put to so strange a use, he would have to remain "at his own charge" unless he got something out of the rogue money]."

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LISTS OF CATHEDRAL CLERGY

DEANS :—

1304	Ferquhard	1500	Master Adam Gordon
1342	Adam Herok	1529	Alexander Suther-
1358	William de Fores		land
1434	Robert Scrymgeour	1557	Wm. Hepburn
1455	Patrick Fraser	1565-1597	Gavin Borthwick
1462	John de Ferne	1608-1638	John Gray
1487	Sir Donald Ross		

CHANCELLORS :—

1366	John Wasil	1536	Sir John Dingwall
1381	Thomas Wyse	1544	Sir John Matheson
1446	David de Notingham	1547	Master John Craig
1455	Thomas Quliatt	1557	Master John Jaksoun
1497	Patrick Dunbar	1577-1581	George Sinclair
1520	Sir Wm. Fudes	1602-1610	Thomas Pape

## PRECENTORS:—

1368	Sir John Derlynge	1557	Robert Stewart
1455	John Kenniti	1577-1583	Gilbert Gray
1497	James Beaton	1583	Donald Logan
1504	Sir John Poilson	1599-1610	William Pape
1515	Sir Thomas Murray		

## TREASURERS:—

1329-1342	Gilbert de Rosmarkyn	1547	William Gordon
1455	William Tulloch	1564	David Carnegy
1530-1546	Thomas Stewart	1571-1602	William Gray
		1603	James Gray

## ARCHDEACONS:—

1297-1304	Ferquhard	1455	Alex. Sutherland
1328	Andrew Herdmans- ton	1520	Sir John Dingwall
1365	Sir John of Moray	1529	William Gordon
1382	William Forrester	1544-1551	Master James Brady
1396	John of Innes	1551-1577	John Sinclair
1440	William Sutherland	1577-1581	Robert Innes
1445	Richard de Holland	1610	Master M. Pont

LIST OF THE MINISTERS OF DORNOCH FROM THE  
16TH CENTURY*(Fasti Eccl.).*

- 1569 William Gray.  
 1588 William Paip.  
 1614 John Gray. Translated from Clyne, to which he returned before 1621.  
 1639 Alexander Monro. Translated from Golspie. Deposed in 1649.  
 1648 George Gray, A.M. Graduated at St. Andrews Univ. in 1645. Died in 1662.  
 1680 John Ross, A.M. Translated from Latheron. De-mitted office in 1691.  
 1690 William Mackay. Translated to Cromdale in 1694.  
 1702 Archibald Bowie. Translated to Monzie in 1710.  
 1713 Robert Kirk. Married Jean Ross in 1747. Died in 1758.

1759. John Sutherland, A.M. Translated from Kilmallie. Died in 1777.
- 1778 John Bethune, A.M. Translated from Harris, D.D. of Aberdeen Univ. in 1812. He died in 1816, in his 71st year.
- 1817 Angus Kennedy, A.M. Translated from Lairg. He went out at the Disruption in 1843, and died in - 1855, in the 52nd year of his ministry.
- 1837 George Rainy Kennedy. Studied in Glasgow University. Licensed in 1834, and ordained A. and S. to his father in 1837.
- 1843 Alexander Maciver, A.M. Translated from Sleat. Died in 1852.
- 1853 William Forsyth, A.M. Translated to Abernethy.
- 1863 Donald Macleod. Translated to Dundee. Became minister of St. Columba's, London.
- 1866 Duncan Stewart, A.B. Translated to Elgin, and thence to Spot.
- 1878 Donald Grant, M.A. Translated from Clyne. Became a D.D. of St. Andrews University in 1903. Died in 1906.

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#### LIST OF PROVOSTS OF DORNOCH DURING THE 17TH CENTURY

The late Mr D. W. Kemp, Assessor for Dornoch to the Convention of Burghs, from an examination of old records prepared the following list of Provosts of Dornoch during the 17th century:—

Thomas Murray	.	.	.	1631 - 1634
Walter Murray	.	.	.	1634 - 1637
John Sutherland	.	.	.	1637 - 1638
Thos. Manson (1)	.	.	.	1638 - 1645
Alexander Murray	.	.	.	1645 - 1649
Robert Gray	.	.	.	1649 - 1656
Andrew Manson	.	.	.	1656 - 1665
Thos. Manson (2)	.	.	.	1665 - 1672

LIST OF 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY COMMISSIONERS TO  
PARLIAMENT FOR THE BURGH

Walter Murray	.	.	.	.	1639 - 41
Thomas Manson	.	.	.	.	1646
Robert Gray	.	.	.	.	1648
Walter Swinton	.	.	.	.	1650
Robert Woolsey	.	.	.	.	1656 "
Alexander Gordon	.	.	.	.	1661
Alexander Ross	.	.	.	.	1670 - 3
George Gordon	.	.	.	.	1685 - 6
John Anderson	.	.	.	.	1693 - 5
John Urquhart	.	.	.	.	1703 - 6



## GLOSSARY

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- Abacus, the uppermost member of a capital.  
Adois, business; affairs.  
Allure-walk, the path along a wall-head.  
Anefald, honest.  
Arage, servitude in men and horses due by tenants to their landlords.  
Arcade, a series of arches supported on piers or pillars.  
Arris, the sharp edge formed by two surfaces meeting at an angle.  
Ashlar, masonry formed of rectilinear hewn stones.  
Assise-aill, duty on ale.  
Attour, moreover.  
Bartisan, a projecting unroofed turret at a wall-head.  
Bailey, the courtyard of a castle.  
Batter, the sloped or raking base of a wall.  
Bend, being.  
Bigg, to build.  
Boddine, prepared; provided.  
Bot or Butt, without.  
Bowtell, a convex rounded or pointed moulding.  
Bowyer or Boyer, archer or maker of bows.  
*Brassina*, brewhouse.  
Bruik, to enjoy or possess.  
Burgage, the tenure by which the property in royal burghs is held under the Crown.  
Cemail, a chain-mail covering for the neck and shoulders.  
Chamfer, an arris cut aslope to form a splay.  
*Cimba*, boat.  
Circumdat, surrounded.  
*Clare constat*, a deed executed by a subject superior to complete the title of his vassal's heir to the lands held by the deceased vassal.  
Clistis, disputes.  
Collude, to conspire.  
*Columbarium*, dovecot.  
Corbel, a stone bracket for carrying a superincumbent weight.  
Crear, a kind of lighter.  
Darloch, a short sword or dagger.  
Davach, an old measure of land extending to either one or four ploughgates.

Dowle, dual.

Entasis, the curved line in which the shaft of a column diminishes.

Escheat, property which goes to the State by forfeiture.

*Ex propria motu*, appointment of a bishop by the Pope's own selection.

Feufarm, a tenure where the vassal instead of military service pays in grain or money.

Fillet, a narrow flat band in a group of mouldings.

Flyt, to quarrel or brawl.

Forinsec service, that rendered to the King outwith Scotland.

*Furca et fossa*, the right of pit and gallows.

Gait or Gate, highway or road.

Garbal tithes, tithes of the sheaves of all kinds of grain.

Gargoyle, a runnel or gutter-spout projecting from a face of wall.

Guidis, goods.

Gryt lichtlie, a great slight.

Haunt, to frequent.

Infangthief, the right to judge and punish a thief caught within the baron's jurisdiction.

Keep, the donjon or great tower of a castle.

*Lese majeste*, high-treason.

Lucarne, a dormer window.

Lymmaris, scoundrels. In Scots law equivalent to thieves or rievvers.

Maill or Mail, rent.

Mair, an overseer, an officer of justice, a messenger-at-arms.

Mart, beef. *G. Mart*, a cow.

Meith, a boundary.

Merk Scots, an old Scotch silver coin worth 13s 4d Scots, or 13½d stg.

Motte, a fortress of the eleventh century, characterised by a ditch round an artificial mound and a palisade enclosing wooden erections.

Moyen, means.

Mullion, an upright division between the lights of windows in a Gothic arch.

Newel, the upright shaft round which a spiral stair turns.

Necking, the narrow moulding on the lower part of a capital, where it springs from a shaft or column.

Nolt, cattle.

Olkie, weekly.

Outfangthief, a baron's right to deal with a thief taken outwith his own jurisdiction.

Outsettis, outskirts.

Outschot, to overreach or outdo.

Pendicle, a croft.

P-tie, penalty.

*Per comprisum*, the method of electing a bishop by which the chapter delegated the choice to certain of its members or to outsiders.

*Perlustrate*, to survey thoroughly.

*Piner*, for pinner, a pounder of cattle, or the pound-keeper.

*Pink*, a ship with a very narrow stern.

*Piscina*, a niche in the wall to the south of the altar with a small basin and water-drain where the priest rinsed the chalice after mass.

*Plak*, for Plack, a small copper coin formerly current in Scotland, of the value of four pennies Scots.

*Pleno jure*, with full authority.

*Plinth*, the projecting base of a well.

*Portergopines*, dues probably paid in grain to the janitor of the castle. *Gopine*, a handful.

*Prepositus*, abbot.

*Quirk*, a small acute channel between mouldings.

*Quoin*, the corner or angle of a building.

*Reddendo*, the rent or service payable for land held in feudal tenure.

*Rewallars*, rulers.

*Rowis*, galleries.

*Riggis*, long narrow sections of ploughed ground.

*Ryne*, ruin.

*Sanctuary*, a special privilege granted by the Pope or King to do honour to some favoured church or some patron saint by which temporary protection was offered to fugitives pursued by the avenger of some real or supposed crime.

*Sac*, the right of judging in a suit in law.

*Sasine* or *Seisin*, the deed by which legal possession is given of feudal property.

*Scoinson* arch, the arch spanning the inner opening of a window.

*Sedilia*, stone seats in the south wall of the chancel for the officiating clergy.

*Selerine*, ceiling.

*Skant*, scarcity.

*Soc*, the power of holding a court in a district.

*Soffit*, the under side of a lintel or arch.

*Splay*, a surface which makes an oblique angle with another.

*Spreath*, a herd of cattle taken away as spoil.

*Staller*, stallkeeper. Equivalent to the beadle or verger of to-day.

*Stallinger*, the right of erecting booths at fairs; dues paid for such a right.

*Stouthreif*, theft with violence.

*Sutor*, shoemaker.

*Thek*, thatch.

Them, a warranty.

Thir, these.

Tholl, Thol, the right to exact customs for goods passing through a proprietor's lands.

Tinsell, forfeiture or loss.

*Titulo oneroso*, title by purchase.

Toft, a stance for a house and small garden.

Trayne, to draw forth.

Trest cuisgne, trusty cousin.

Umquhile, onetime, deceased.

Virginal, an old keyed musical instrument of one string, with jack and quill, like a spinet, but shaped like a small pianoforte.

Voussoirs, the wedge-shaped stones which form an arch.

Wadset, a conveyance of land in security for, or in satisfaction of, a debt or obligation, reserving power to the debtor to recover his land.

Woone, past part. of win, to dry corn by exposing it to the air.

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